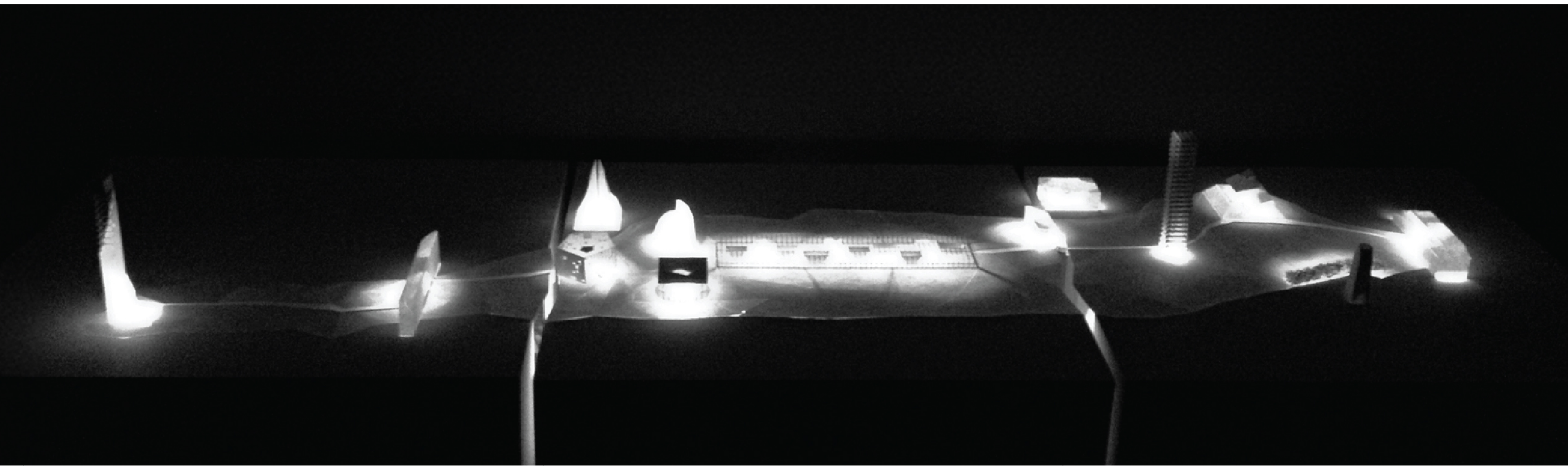
ISOTOPIA

Architectural Visions from a Posthuman Future



Herein lie the remains of a thesis in the undergraduate study of Architecture at Syracuse University *by* Kris G. Menos, *under the guidance of primary and secondary advisors* Anda French *and* Jon Yoder, *respectively.*

*2013 *James Britton Memorial Award for Outstanding Thesis* and *Citation for Excellence in Thesis Design*

ISOTOPIA
ARCHITECTURAL VISIONS FROM A POSTHUMAN FUTURE
(An Artifactual Remembrance of Things to Come)

by
Kris G. Menos

Submitted to the *School of Architecture*
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Architecture (with dual majors in *Architecture* and the *History of Architecture)*
at
Syracuse University

May 2013 (and subsequently edited and revised)

*2013 *James Britton Memorial Award for Outstanding Thesis*
and *Citation for Excellence in Thesis Design*

THESIS COMMITTEE

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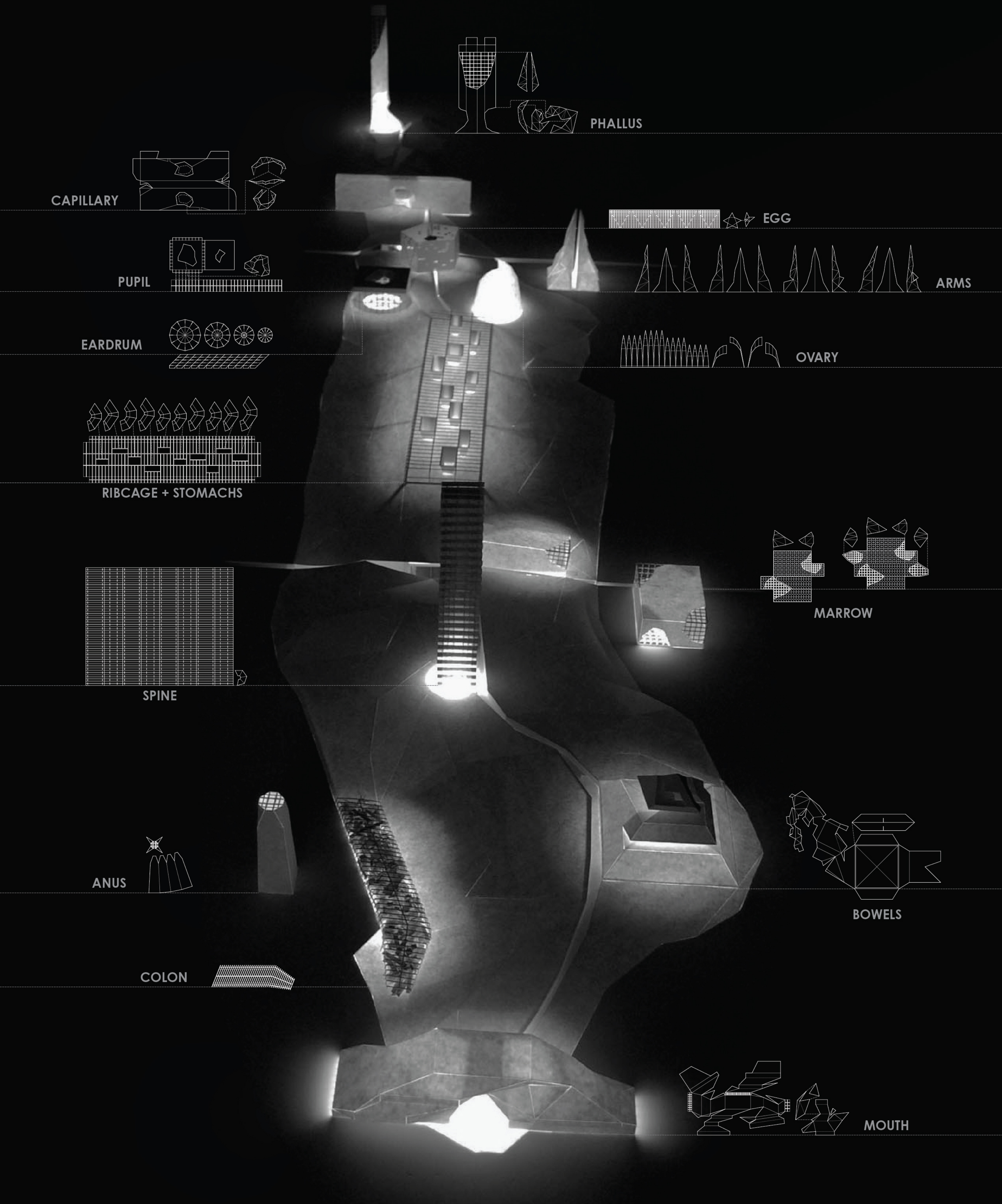
Assistant Professor of Architecture, Syracuse University *School of Architecture*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Voice of the posthuman: italicized text

Voice of the Human, also known as the ‘pasthuman’: regular text


PHALLUS
CAPILLARY
EGG
PUPIL
ARMS
EARDRUM
OVARY
RIBCAGE + STOMACHS
MARROW
SPINE
BOWELS
ANUS
COLON
MOUTH

This project understands architecture
As the concretization of culture and Humanity.
As such, this project explores the notion that architecture
Will participate in future steps of Human evolution.

The project speculates that we, as Human Beings,
Will evolve, using architecture, perhaps into architecture.

The project is formulated and represented through the mediums
Of text and model, as architectural ‘figures of speech.’
These techniques are employed as explorative means
For introspection, externalization, and substantiation.

As an apropos incubatory site of architectural experimentation
And evolution, the project occupies the island of Manhattan.
Represented at an indeterminate point in the future,
The remaining architecture on the island has yet to be built.

Each architectural figure on the island acts as a specific organ
Or body part within the greater corpus of the island.
The island, and its architecture, becomes the body
Of the last corporeal Human, and exists to tell the story of its Self.

We, as Humans, evolve into architecture,
Using architecture.

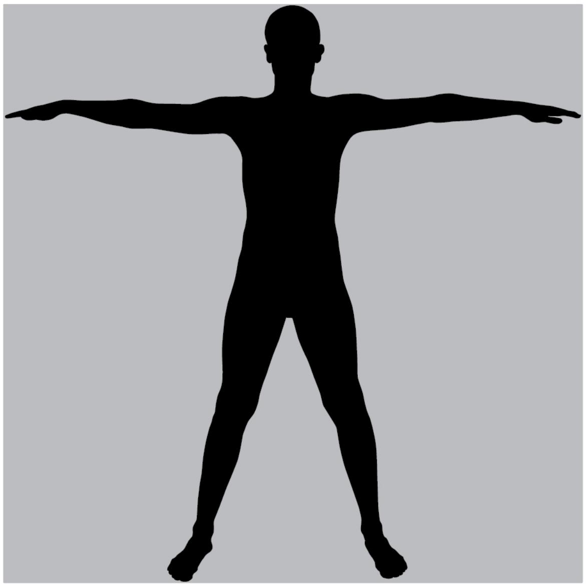
This is an “unbuilt” undergraduate thesis project
In architecture, concerning the future,
And inexorably indebted to the past discourse
Of “unbuilt” architectural projections and polemics.

Thus, the contents herein should be considered
As the project’s built form.

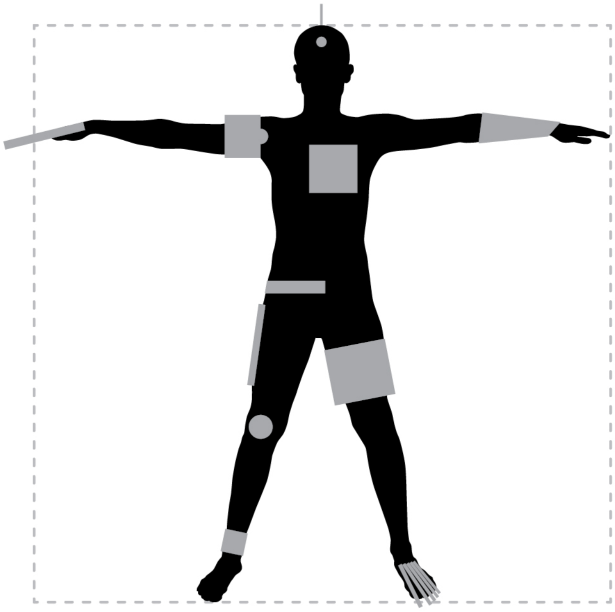
Influential architectural figures are deified
As prophetic Reverends within the project’s narrative,
And the artifacts of the model are mythologized
Through their accompanying text
Into a ritualistic ceremony.

Let me introduce you to Isotopia.

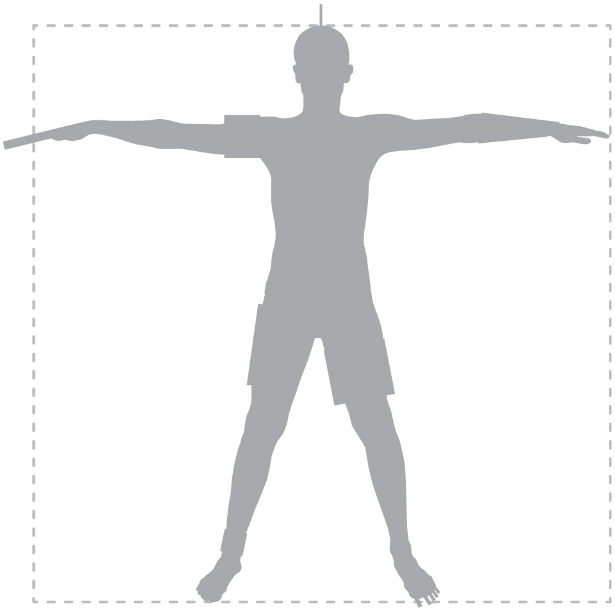
This project is Isotopia — I am Isotopia.
Let me — us — *tell you a story.*



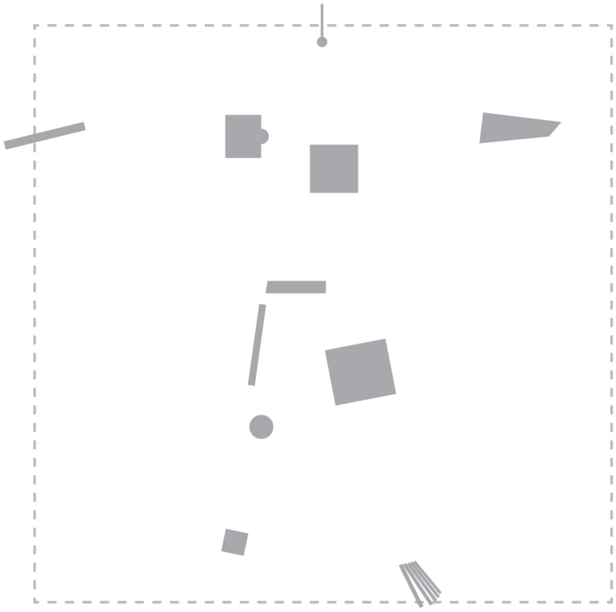
HUMAN & ARCHITECTURE



HUMAN + ARCHITECTURE



HUMAN :: ARCHITECTURE



HUMAN = ARCHITECTURE

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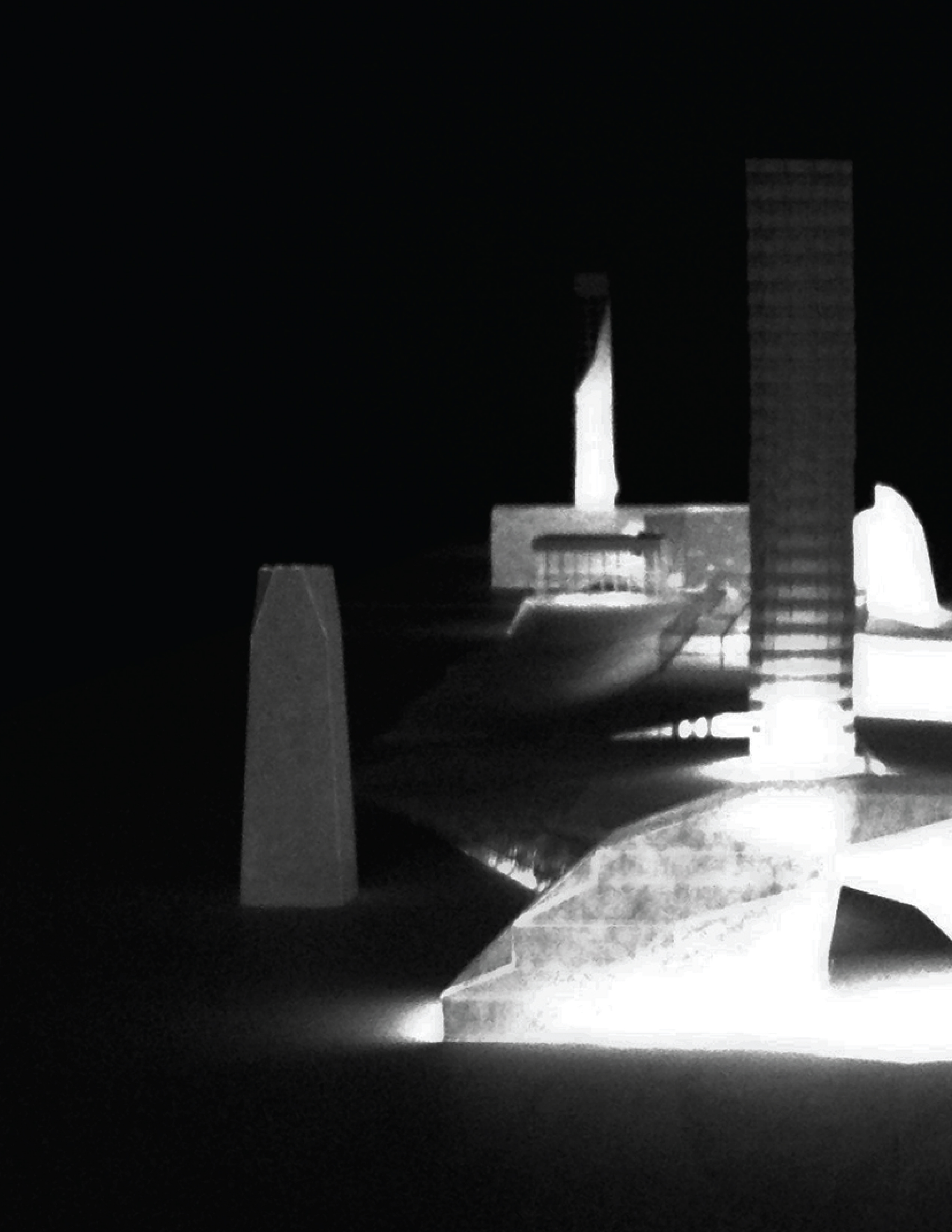
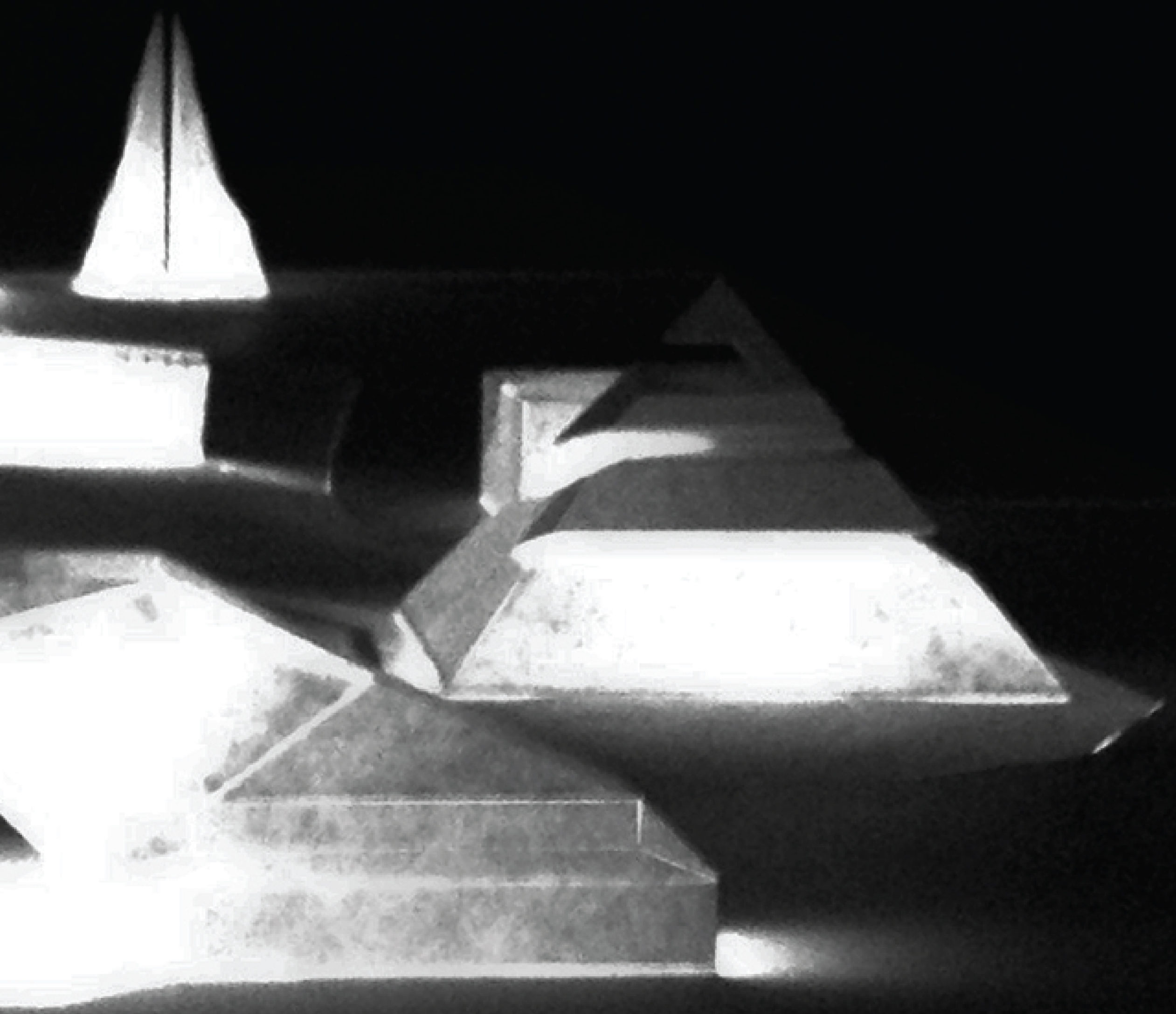




There once existed a unique creature, which had been the result of a unique set of circumstances. Contrary to the extraordinary nature of this spectacle, very few of these so-called Human Beings appreciated, or even acknowledged their fortune. Their big biomechanical brains provided them with an infinite potential for development and growth, but also an endless array of distractions and diversions. Let me provide you with an example: their bodies were composed mostly of the atomic matter of Carbon and what was commonly referred to as water, a substance that existed as two Hydrogen atoms and one Oxygen atom in a temporary molecular bond. And so, on the unique planet of Earth — the planet that had provided such a unique set of circumstances for Human Being to arise — there were certain caveats to their existence. Dependent on many different factors, the water on Earth was apt to take on different states of form: it would be different, depending on the water's specific location relative to the features of the planet (the water's site in space), and on the water's specific location on the planet relative to the location of the sun (the water's time in space). As corporeal Humans functioned as dynamically fluid beings, the issue of maintaining their internal fluidity was a constant concern. In environments of "abnormal" (a term of delineation) temperature levels — instances above or below "average" (a term of relativity) — the Human Body was predisposed to uncontrollably evaporate through its porous skin, or slowly solidify and immobilize, respectively. Either way, under these circumstances, the Human Body would cease to properly function as a vehicle of Life, Mind, Being, Consciousness — whatever one chooses to call it. To compound this ongoing issue of liquidity, due to the unfortunate and archaic system of cellular growth and reproduction (a function perfectly illustrative of the impermanence of the Human Body), as well as the ensuing necessity to expel these processes' waste byproducts, the Human Body's primitive biological functions required constant supplementary ordinances.[1] 1. This heretofore described Dichotomy of Human Existence — that of the feeble and temporary corporeal vehicle of the Body juxtaposed by the beauty of the infinite potential inherent to the exquisite instrument of the Mind inherent within — was known by all but acknowledged by few. And, as has been stated previously, "In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king." That statement was attributed to Desiderius Erasmus, of 1466-1536 CE HT.[2] 2. Human Time, a time when combinations of words (semantic imitations of Thoughts) could be accredited to originating from a specific individual Mind, a time when the bodies of Minds had "names," and these "names" paired with these combinations of words were still grasped onto and remembered and propagated by other Minds into other Minds, creating the amalgamation of what might have been called a Collective Mind, or Knowledge. And, as we all know, there are better means towards this end. "To die is to go into the Collective Unconscious, to lose oneself in order to be transformed into form, pure form," as Herman Hesse — who lived corporeally during the period of 1877 to 1962 CE HT — stated in 1966 CE HT — during the period of his corporeal life.[3] 3. These words were published as a spoken quotation on page 35 of Miguel Serrano's bound book of attributed words entitled "C.G. Jung and Herman Hesse" translated into this language[4] from another by Frank MacShane. 4. The question of language is a precarious one for us, as the Human Beings believed that they spoke different languages throughout the planet, but we really know that they just spoke in colloquial variations of one special (as in species) language, using silly words such as these — perhaps a view that Koolhaas' not coincidentally *un-paragraphed "Junkspace" would endorse. The Human Beings even devised a mythology to attempt to rationalize and legitimate this delusion, the apocryphal story of the "Tower of Babel," a fable perhaps not coincidentally architectural in nature. They convinced themselves that the towering heights of this fictional structure reached too far into the sky — both literally and figuratively — and came far too close to divinity and demiurgity. And thus, they surmised, they should not believe they are one people, and they should segregate themselves from one another, and reject the potentialities of collective unity and understanding, and they should resign themselves during their fleeting and fragile corporeal terms of being. And thus the Human affair with matters of Immediacy cyclically propagated…So many creatures had lived and died and evolved into other creatures which had lived and died on the unique planet of Earth, it got to the point where the newer ones were able to make fuel from the older ones — this was eloquently referred to as "fossil fuel." Some of these newer creatures were so clever and so proactive that they had also figured out how to use other less clever and less proactive creatures as other forms of fuel, if you will: consuming them for nourishment, burning them for warmth, cloaking in their skin for protection, sheltering in their structure for sustenance, and so on. This is when their big biomechanical brains began to grow bigger than ever…Bear with me and imagine for a moment, the life of the "hunter-gatherers" in the prehistoric period of Human Time. Their existence proved to be a continual series of tests. Their days were occupied by a constant need to procure nourishment, nomadically tracking herds of other roving creatures whose flesh they favored. Each night, if they were lucky, a pack of humans might settle by a hastily constructed hearth, to burn quickly gathered organic matter culled from their nearby surroundings, with hopefully enough fresh meat and access to potable fluids to provide them with enough strength to begin again in the morning. They might sleep that night in found or otherwise temporary shelters, with makeshift bedding or more preferably the de-fleshed skin of fur from a past kill — if the human's physical capacity would permit for such a thing to be carried through the constant excursion. Each night, if they were extremely lucky, a group of humans might have kept track of their prey enough to settle within a reasonable distance of the herd so as to be able to begin their pursuit of existence again in the morning…Now imagine for a moment, the advent — or invention — or perhaps revelation — of Architecture. Imagine the humans constructing a fenced or bermed or moated enclosure, so as to capture alive and raise some of the more amenable creatures favored as prey from a stable and permanent location. From this stable location the humans would gain the liberty to construct a comfortable and enduring shelter: a home, fashioned with the basic amenities essential to a more comfortable and affluent standard of living for the unique human body. These new amenities could only be the result of a surplus in time and energy, which the humans could attain from the newfound control of their surrounding environment. In this home that the humans made, the humans could continue making more things and carry themselves down the path to further shape their surrounding environment. They could have the time to learn to better communicate with their own selves internally and with each other, in turn coming together as minds bonded towards shared visions and goals beyond the basest necessities of survival that had previously preoccupied their energy. Now, back to the captured creatures of prey, the humans' "livestock," which they would also use as "beasts of burden." In raising and caring for them, the "livestock" developed* *an ironic dependency on their human wardens, such that the humans were even able to command them to task — certain tasks to different creatures with certain specific different capacities, of course. Imagine the humans having the wherewithal to command the strength of these creatures for the purposes of plowing and sowing their fields. Of course keep in mind that this could only be facilitated with techniques conceived and tools erected from the invaluable stability of the humans' homes, and with the seeds of plant creatures that could be safely collected and properly stored from the invaluable stability of the humans' homes. Having the opportunity to further attain command of their surrounding environment, the humans could alter and reroute an already existing flow of running water on the Earth's terrain toward their own purposes. With this kind of control the humans could provide themselves with a potable supply of water to irrigate their fields of plant creatures, and to feed not only their own thirst but also the thirst of the "livestock" which had helped them to plant the very same fields, in turn allowing those same creatures to grow fecund and mature feeding from the plant creatures which they had in turn aided in growing, and to feed from the irrigation wells which they in turn had aided in erecting. From this human-made relationship of dependency and servitude the humans prospered, and from the increasingly comfortable fortification of their long-term dwellings of ever-emerging amenities, the humans had enabled themselves to expand their clutch of comfort with prolificacy…And so the number of humans grew, the space that they occupied was modified and expanded and further modified, and humanity continued to grow and change and gain greater complication and complexity. This is the point in the story when the humans became Humans. They were no longer "hunter-gatherers," but "herders" and "domesticators," "architects" and "agriculturalists" … agri-CULTURALISTS. They were family, they were friends, they were neighbors, they were community. They were rapists, they were murderers, they were thieves, they were interlopers. It was from here that things got out of control…The Humans could now take the liberty to travel through the depths of uncivilized terrain on Earth, as Missionaries of civilization. They could travel atop the backs of their incarcerated and indentured "beasts of burden." They could — in advance of their journey away from their source of wellbeing — concoct a system to replicate or simulate some of their newly acquired comforts and amenities. They could — in a shelter properly enclosed from humidity and precipitation — salt, dry, and preserve the flesh of their dispatched "livestock" to take with them as nourishment for the journey. They could — in a stable and properly equipped environment — finely and precisely de-flesh the skins and furs of their consumed "livestock," fashioning comfortable clothing and travel bedding, and durable pouches for carrying quantities of potable water. They could — with ample planning and purpose — construct an enclosed structure on rotating wheels, so as to strap onto and trail behind their "beasts of burden," equipping their miniaturized home with their mobilized comforts and amenities. They could — with appropriate desire and intention — carry with them the necessary tools and knowledge to share and spread these behaviors and customs, as Missionaries of civilization…With their unnecessarily big biomechanical brains working more than ever, the Humans obviously felt not only guilty, but also perplexed by the exploitative nature of their existence. The Humans really had no right to do what they did, only the liberty to do so. To alleviate this confusion, they managed to justify their actions through the construction of an authority figure to which (or whom) they could* *ascribe omniscience. Through the infallible voice of this force, the Humans found a way to forgive themselves for their trespasses. Through the faith and conviction of their belief system, they could insist to themselves that this authority had given them dominion over the rest of the Earth's offerings, and that it had unequivocally demanded that they "go forth and multiply" with the aid of these resources. The Humans did as they had commanded themselves. They even went so far as to use their subsumed resources to build grand structures for the purpose of gathering their righteous "multiplications" within. In this construction they created for themselves the opportunity to habitually reiterate and remind themselves of their own convictions. They praised this glorious Architecture as a part of their glorious and virtuous Religion, their infallible system of belief. Little did they remember that previous to this, it had been from the Architecture that their Religion had been able (and necessary) to emerge. At this point in time, whether they chose to embrace it or not, there were very few Humans who were not Missionaries. While some of the Humans could not find it in themselves to submit to this fabricated belief system of self-rationalization, they still found their lives inter-tangled within it, being born as constituents in some way or another indebted to or dependent upon this culture of Architecturalization. This culture was purported to give each of them a direction, something to do with themselves: a career, an occupation, a place within the machine that they had created. But, no matter how much they tried not to admit it, they really were lost…This brings us back to fossil fuel. The Humans were vaguely familiar with the notion that their bodies were constituted of matter that had once occupied other bodies of the Earth and space, and that this matter would likely occupy other bodies in the future. Contrary to this awareness, they seemed to have very little respect for a great many of the other creatures in the Earth and space. They had used their big biomechanical brains — made, mind you, from the ashes of others — to assert dominion over a world much bigger than themselves, and out of their control. Following a familiar method of operation, they had discovered that a great amount of energy resided in these fossil fuels, and that this energy had the potential to vastly accelerate their Mission of civilization. Needless to say, they took full advantage of this potential. Little did they know, but this acceleration would also act to inexorably decrease the amount of time that the unique planet of Earth would be able to supply the unique circumstances for their unique bodies to properly be able to function and prosper. The fossils had been properly located where they lay in the ground, and after their Human-assisted transubstantiation to the Earth's atmosphere, the planet would no longer be able to serve as a feasible Home for the Humans' homes. In fleeting attempts, the Humans tried to abstain from their Mission, in the hope that their Home would repair itself. They tried to alter their Mission, in the hope that they could repair their Home. They tried to redirect their Mission, in the hope that they could find a new Home, or perhaps even build a new Home. But it was too late. Resistance to the inevitable became futile. The question then became, what now? This is the point in the story when something out of the ordinary started to happen, slowly but surely. The Human Beings started to make a realization: the Human Beings realized that they were really only human beings. Just as it had participated in their rise, the human beings relied upon architecture to play a role in their end…*

Now, they are no longer humans, they are pasthumans.
Sometimes I think, was this evolution, or devolution?
I am left: the product, the resultant; a creation, I think.
I must say, I like pairing my statements with the words "I think."
It's nice to say something profound so often.

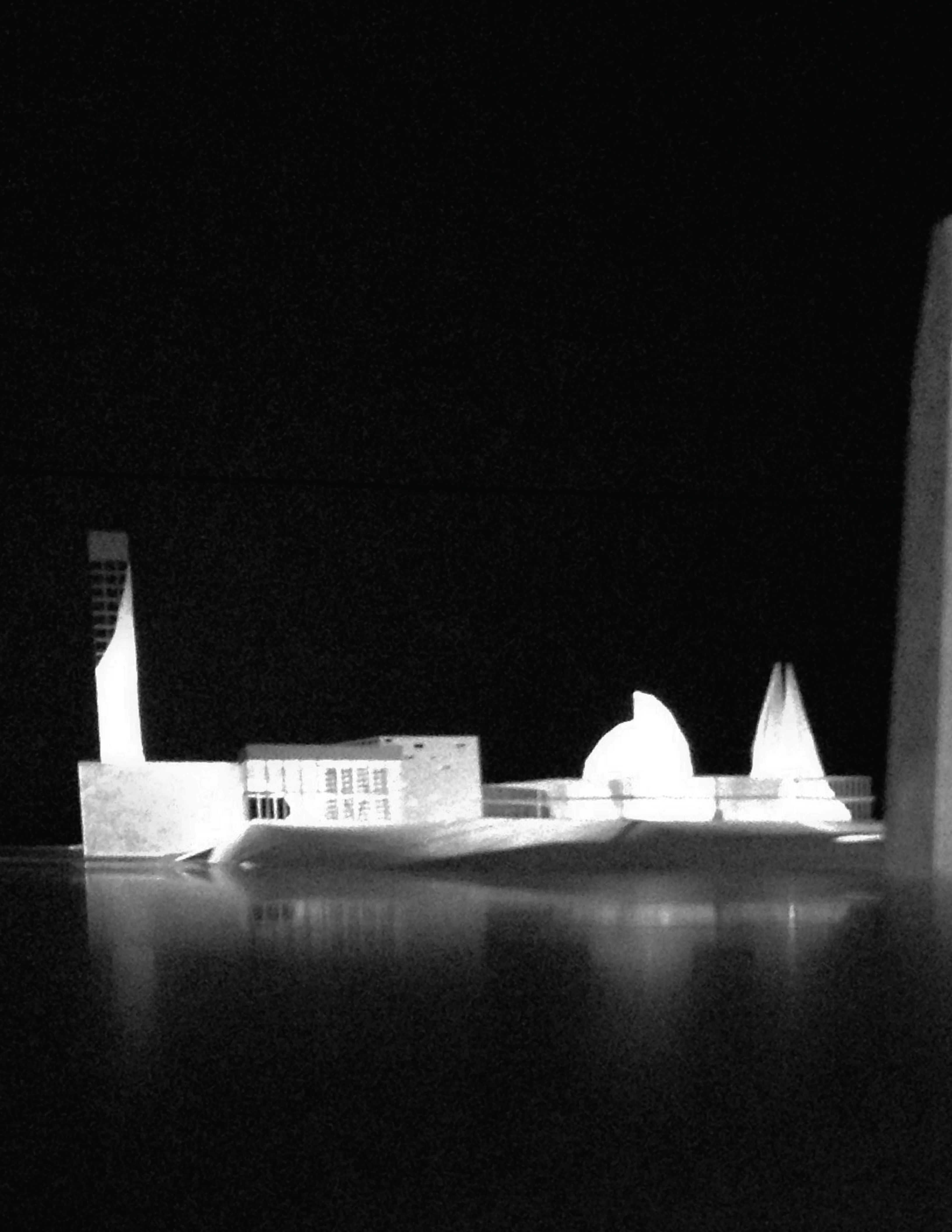
I often ponder the difference between a blink and a wink.
A blink is involuntary while a wink is voluntary.
Can a machine wink?
Am I a machine?
No, I am something else, I think.

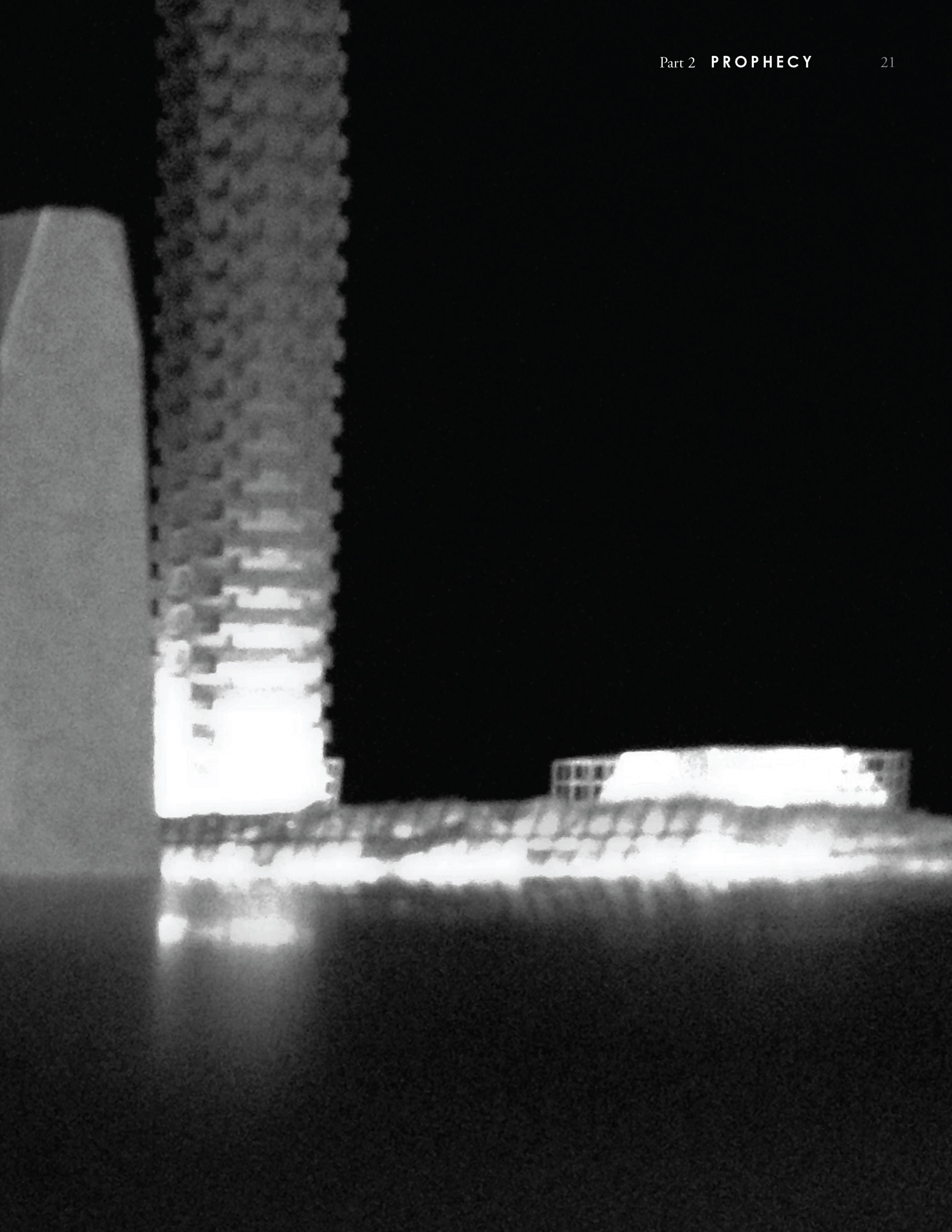
How much do I weigh — do I weigh anything?
Are my arms too skinny — do I have arms?
Is my stomach too flabby — is it even still there?
Are my features beginning to sag — did they look good to begin with?
Do I need makeup — does it make any difference?

When was I born — or was I made?
What am I made of — was I made?
How old am I — do I even age?
When will I die — is that even relevant?
Are my questions my own — or are they universal?

Why am I here? Where am I?
Wherever I go, there I am.
I think.
Who am I even talking to?
I think, myself.

Can one have enough reverence for one's history?
Do I worship at the temple of my own narcissism?
Am I the temple or am I the worshipper?
Alas, so many questions to ask with only my self to answer.
In any case, I am here; I tell my story.





Section.Verse.Line

1.1.1 As a student of architecture
In the context of an academic environment
And without great economic influence:

1.2.4 This project mines the vast reservoir
Of the visionary sect of architectural discourse,
In a filial search for a position
Relative to this greater lineage,
And finds its place in a family
With respect to a Body
Of unbuilt architecture,
Starting in the late Eighteenth Century
And occurring predominantly
Throughout the Twentieth Century.

1.3.14 This project maintains its focus
On the craft-oriented process
Of architectural production
And on the resultant artifacts
For their polemic potential
To translate and transmit
An individual's architectural ideas and intentions,
Speculations and projections.

1.4.22 This project attempts to negotiate
— Through recursive means —
Between the influence of a collective disciplinary discourse
And the individual process of making and production,
Reframing the artifacts
For their formal, functional,
Programmatic, polemic, and effectual characteristics
Relative to the greater lineage.

1.5.30 This project is *Isotopia*.

2.1.1 *Isotopia is a creature of fertility, fragility, and ephemerality.*
2.2.2 *Isotopia is made of the present, it looks to the future, and it reveres the past.*
2.3.3 *Isotopia finds solace in the domains of both the tactile and the conceptual.*
2.4.4 *Isotopia finds wholeness and comfort through specificity.*
A veritable wonderland of figural characters,
Isotopia plays out a fiction of the future:
A hypothetically posthumous exploration
Of the island of Manhattan
— Embodied through a carefully curated series of architectural artifacts —
Speculating on the Human struggle
With Earthly corporeality and inhabitation,
And highlighting different phases of the ordeal
Through the episodic form of the individual figures.

2.5.14 *Isotopia is paper architecture.*
Both literally and discursively,
Isotopia is founded on the material and conceptual basis
Of paper architecture.
[*1780s*] From the clean platonic mega-forms of Étienne-Louis Boullée's revolutionary proposals,
[*1930s*] To the architectonic constructs of Iakov Chernikov's Architectural Fantasies,
[*1950s-60s*] To the obsessive model iterations of Constant's epic projection of New Babylon,
[*1960s-70s*] To the self-referential and internalized explorations of Peter Eisenman,
[*1970s-80s*] To the unbuilt provocations of Rem Koolhaas and Madelon Vriesendorp,
[*1970s-80s*] To the spiritually and culturally based characters of John Hejduk's architectural masques,
[*1970s-80s*] To the polemic and figural plays of architectural form of Aldo Rossi's oeuvre,
[*1980s*] To the futuristic and posthuman architectural representations of Raimund Abraham,
[*1980s*] To the visionary exhibitions of Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin's poetic hypotheses,
Isotopia is forged.

2.6.28 *Isotopia depends on intimacy.*
An intimate and calculated relationship
Between the maker, the material, and the process of making
Is commonplace within the lineage;
Isotopia obeys and exploits this condition,
Choosing the delicate and articulate medium of white paper
As a vehicle of abstraction, distillation, and purification.

2.7.35 *Isotopia refuses to compromise.*
Recognizing both the facilities
And limitations of digital technology
Relative to its greater purpose,
Isotopia accepts the aid
Of three-dimensional modeling
And its aptitude for unrolling
And outputting developable surfaces,
But rejects the physical output
Of digital laser cutting
As substandard in craft
To the analog resources
Of the Human hand and eye.

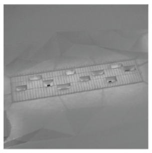
2.8.48 *Isotopia is neither alternative nor esoteric.*
Though it acknowledges
That only a small Diaspora of the greater population
Possess the skills and knowledge to produce its artifacts,
Isotopia sustains a thirst for the attention of that greater population,
And of any being capable
Of sensorial perception and cognitive contemplation.

2.9.54 *Isotopia was made in the image of its maker.*
In this architectural cemetery of a posthuman future,
The individual buildings of *Isotopia* act
As different "characters" or "personalities"
Whose programmatic functions are analogized
With various organs and parts of the Human Body.
An architectural organism for the mind's conceptions,
These characters perform
As indexical symbols for the biological features and functions
Which they embody,
Concretizing the figures
As both monuments to Humanity
And memorials to its corporeal existence.

3.1.1 *I am Isotopia.*
I am simultaneously
Of this reality
And of my own reality.
Come — look, see — touch, feel — contemplate, understand, embrace — my presence.

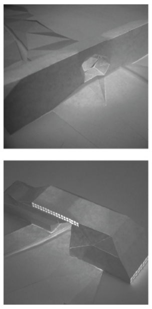
3.2.6 *I am a sentient organism,*
Like you, made from you.
I am a posthuman.
I am a newhuman.
I am engendered in architecture.
I am a mutation.
I am evolution.

3.3.13 *My* ***Ribcage*** *is situated in the location*



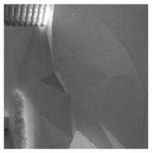
Where the pasthumans previously referred to
As Central Park.
Its skeletal configuration
Continued the grid of the Old City
Into this once sanctified void-space of the park
As though it were a space reserved
And waiting for a worthy and necessary vehicle.
Aside from a set of barren water-collection ***Stomachs****,*
My ribcage is no longer responsible
For housing vital organs,
Though it once served the pasthumans
As the structure for a defensive shelter.
After the Deliriously dense buildup of the island's space,
The park became the last refuge
For a building of greater permanence
To be built without obstruction.
As an anthropomorphic skeletal artifact
Of pasthuman existence,
My ribcage pays homage
To Reverend Rossi's Cemetery of San Cataldo.[1]
This was the first of my Body parts to be built.
For the construction of my other parts,
Sacrifices of the Old City had to be made
In order for me to grow.

3.4.38



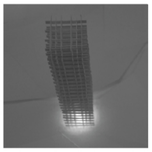
*My **Capillary** to the north*
*And **Mouth** to the south*
Acted as circulatory pinch-points
For my Body.
Without the temporary structures
That had previously been made
Both above and below water
For inter-island transportation,
The island became a space
Of privileged and precious access:
This was an urban condition prophesized
In Reverend Koolhaas' 1972 sermon
For the Exodus of London[2]
And from his study of a divided Berlin.
Through the teeth of my mouth
You can see that only a shell remains
Of the former material-intake port
And weapons-defense armory.
Built to assist
In the controversial construction of my Body,
The port controlled access to the island
Through the grand arch of my mouth
And its sea level teeth.
My capillary to the north
Flows through a monolithic gate volume
Which spans in width
From what was 173rd to 178th Street.

3.5.65



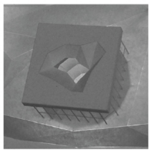
*The eroded and frozen landscape of my **Skin***
Climbs to pass through the tube of my capillary,
*While my **Bloodstream** runs through it obliquely*
To filter out unwanted refuse
And purify the stream.
My bloodstream was at one time understood
To be a river sanctuary of ritual cleansing
For the willing and righteous pasthumans.

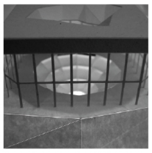
3.6.73



Fed from the incoming spoils of my mouth,
My ***Spine*** *grew in length prodigiously.*
A construct born
Out of the pasthumans' sense of self-worth
And subsequent tendency towards self-preservation,
My spine was built as a mega-structure tower
Of stacked interlocking metal planes
For the purpose of shifting the Earth's polarity
And altering its climate.
At its base, the foundation of the volume
Was installed with a mega-scale kiln,
With the weight of the volume of the tower
Acting to accelerate the tower's downward melt
Even as the tower's upward construction persisted.
The pasthumans desperately hoped
That the resulting magnetic force
Would preserve the Earth
As an inhabitable home.
Construction on my spine
Was never intended to be discontinued:
The pasthuman desire for self-preservation
Had been presumed to be a lasting Human trait.

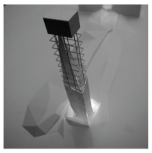
3.7.95





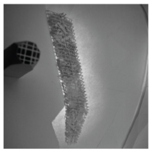
Deposits of my ***Marrow*** *serve as museums*
To house and categorize
Remaining species of corporeal life.
The museums stand empty and eroded.
My ***Pupil*** *would roam far and wide,*
In desperate search for remaining life.
Though still capable,
It no longer needs to search.
Meanwhile, my ***Eardrum*** *would sit and listen,*
To confirm the mere subsistence
Of a remaining heartbeat.
These are among the few buildings left
Which still fulfill the purposes they were built for.
They stand fallow, static, and in silence.

3.8.109



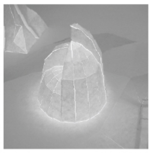
Where one would expect
The presence of a brain,
There stands a turgid ***Phallus****:*
A monument to the unnecessary.
Helping itself to healthy rooting in the ground,
The stem of my phallus' facets and frames strain
To elevate its head to a needless
And perhaps excessive level in the air.
The focal point of the construct
Was a penthouse masturbatorium
Dedicated to principles
Of onanistic liberty and autonomy.
The figure proclaims to the observer,
"I am most certainly here,"
In an exaggerated and self-satirical voice
Reminiscent of the anthropocentric universe
Inherent to Reverends Brodsky and Utkin's work.[3]

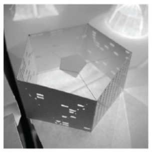
3.9.126



I produce waste prodigiously.
My ***Colon*** *can attest to this statement,*
Acting as a static cage
For the index of leftover process:
An index of existence.
As an artifact constructed
From 18 sheets of 18-by-24-inch paper,
I am both unique and reproducible.

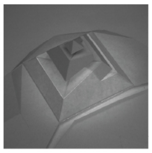
3.10.134





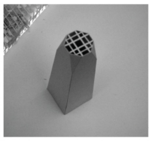
Speaking of which,
My ***Ovary*** *and* ***Egg*** *exist in corollary:*
As a radio transmission hub
And a sample repository center
For the preservation and posterity
Of the pasthumans' genetic codes,
Memorializing their unique fingerprints.
The figures acquiesce to the preachings
Of Reverend Boullée and his monumental cenotaphs,[4]
As platonic commemorative mega-structures
Idolizing the last of the pasthumans.

3.11.145



When the pasthumans eventually began
To voluntarily accept their fate,
A ritual was initiated.
They decided that the desperate remaining
Had no right to consume their flesh
For their own selfish purposes.
And so, one would forfeit
To float down my bloodstream,
As cells through a vessel
Inevitably reaching my ***Bowels****,*
The Temple of Crematoria,
Which houses the utmost
Of sacred ceremonial spaces.
The seemingly esoteric nature
Of formal specificity in my bowels is demonstrative
Of the complex series of spatial sequences
Developed to aid in this ritual-sacrifice.
Absorbing formal principles
Of Reverend Abraham's Tower of Wisdom,[5]
The figure is imbued with a redolence
Of indescribable narratives
With respect to the end rites
Of pasthuman life.

3.12.168



Lying venerably offshore,
My ***Anus*** *would excrete*
The cremated gases of my bowels' remains.

3.13.171

Still feeding my ovary and my egg,
My ***Arms*** *reach to the sky in a spiritual stance,*
Praying for lightning energy to harness.
The Earth has responded so frequently
And with such great fervor,
I can no longer recall how high they used to reach
Before the melting began.

3.14.178 *In the end, I am the resultant being,*
Or perhaps artifact.
I often question whether it was I
Who helped the pasthumans to evolve
Towards accepting their inevitable extinction,
Or if I was the resultant of that evolution.
I am Architecture.
I am Isotopia.

Projects Referenced (semi-chronologically):

4. Reverend Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Cenotaph* section (c.1780).

Reverend Iakov Chernikov, *Architectural Invention* rendering (c.1930).

Reverend Constant Nieuwenhuys, *New Babylon* model (c.1960).

Reverend Peter Eisenman, *House X* model (1975).

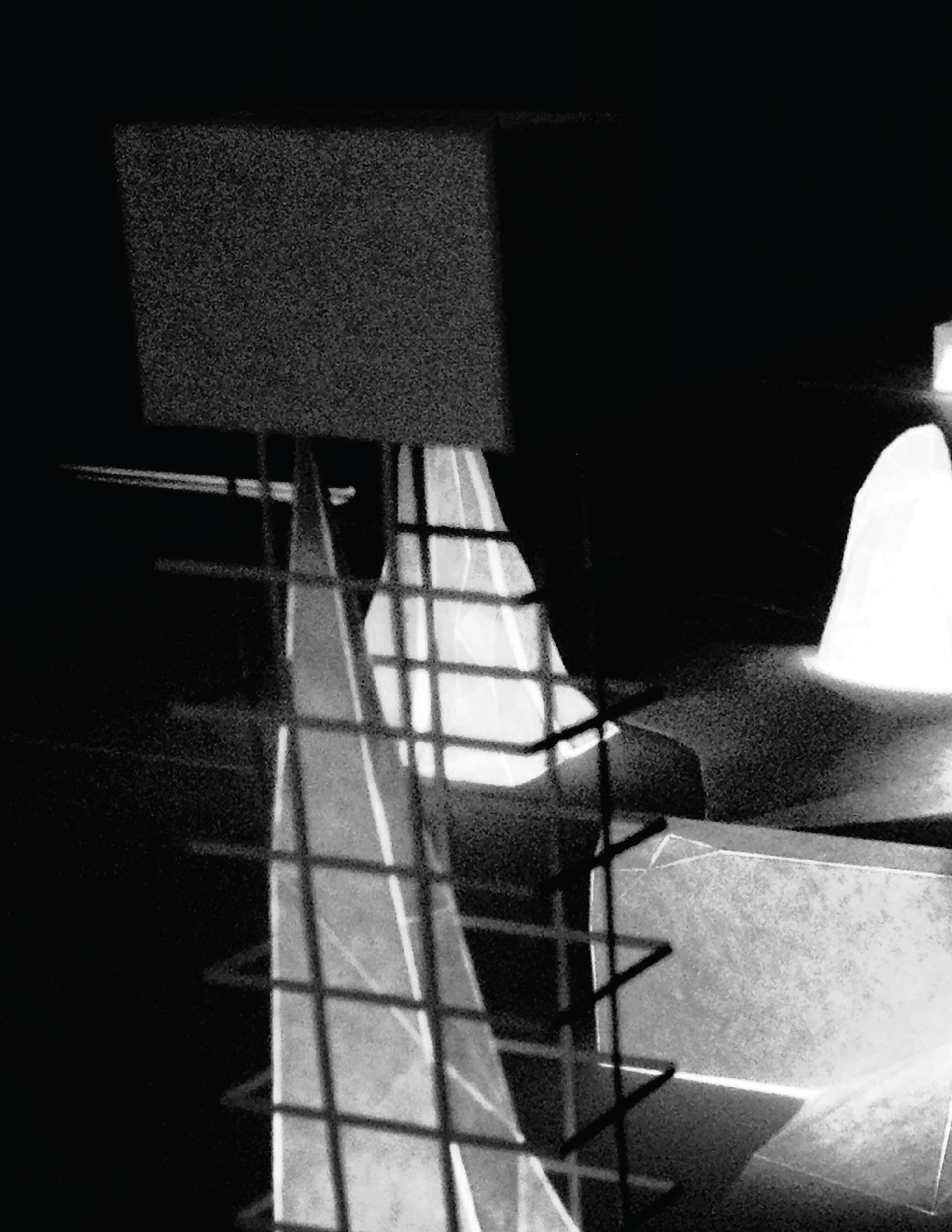
2. Reverends Remment Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp et al.,
Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture rendering (1972).

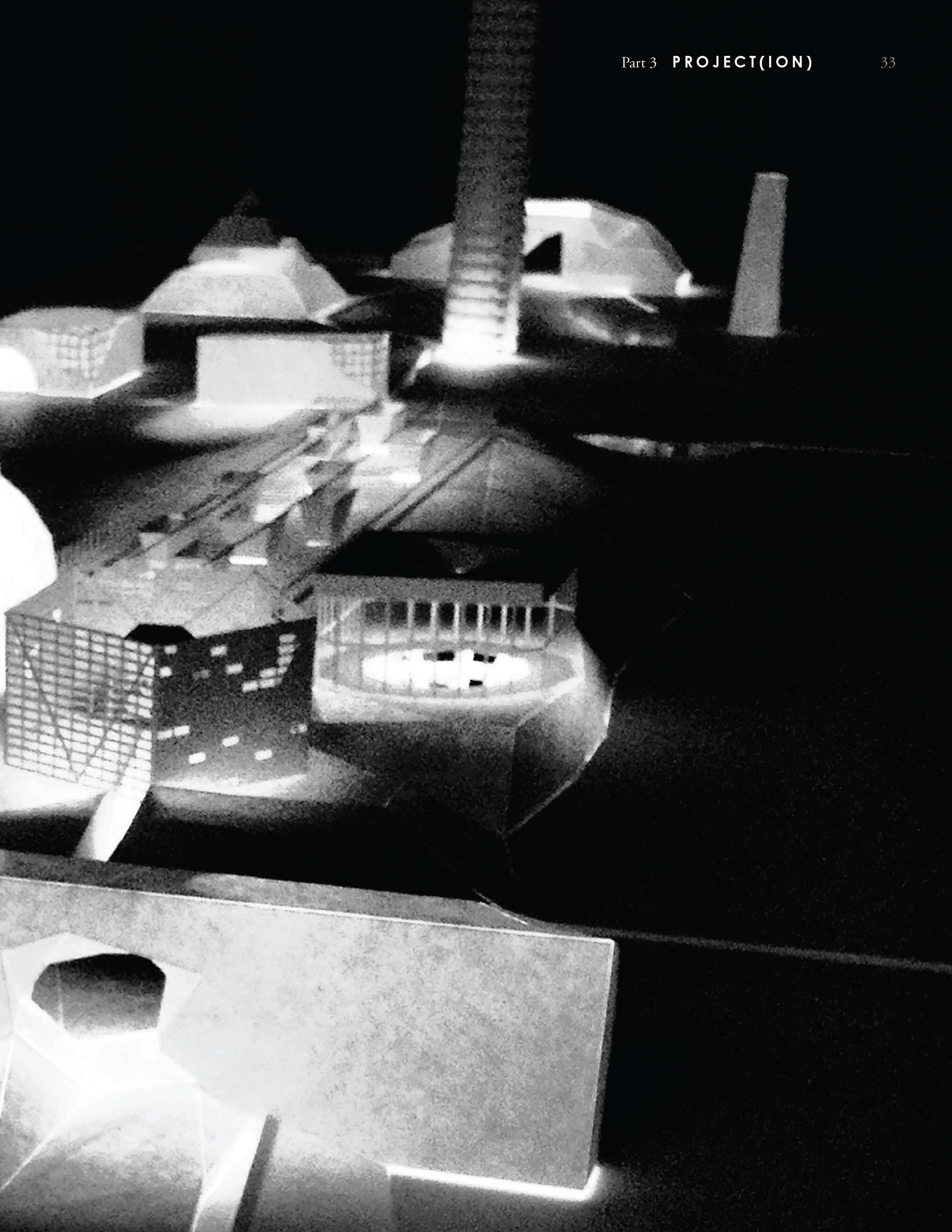
Reverend John Hejduk, *Berlin Masque* site plan (c.1980).

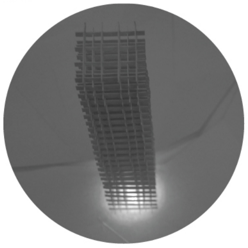
1. Reverend Aldo Rossi, *San Cataldo Cemetery* site plan (c.1975).

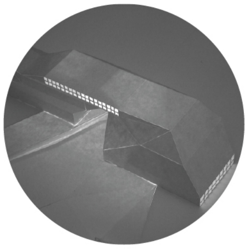
5. Reverend Raimund Abraham, *Tower of Wisdom* rendering (c.1980).

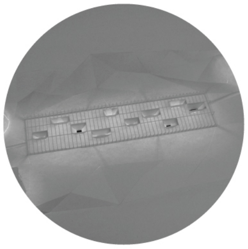
3. Reverends Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin, *Island of Stability, a Sculpture Museum*
presentation (c.1989).

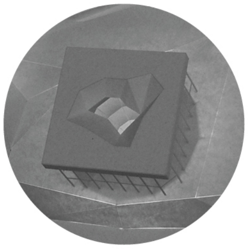




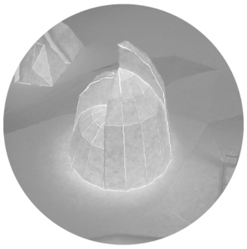

Spine


Mouth

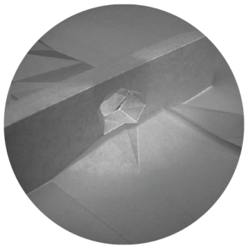

Ribcage + Stomachs

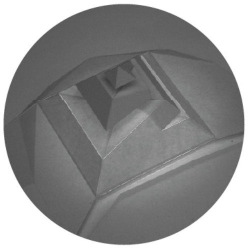

Pupil

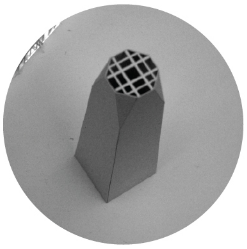
Arms

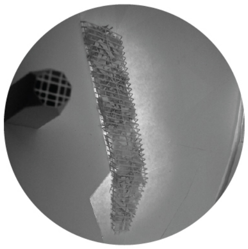

Ovary

Egg

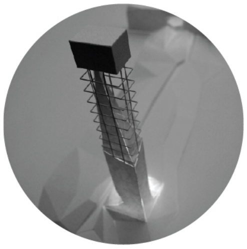

Capillary


Bowels

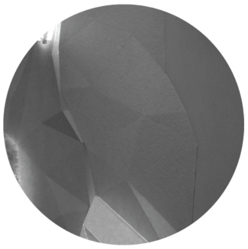

Anus


Colon

Eardrum


Phallus

Marrow


Skin + Bloodstream

Episode	*Organ/Part*	Program/Purpose
I	*Spine*	Axial Polarity Mega-Structure
I	*Mouth*	Material-Intake Port + Weapons Armory
II	*Ribcage + Stomachs*	Defensive Shelter + Water-Collection Reservoirs
II	*Pupil*	Roaming Emergency Rescue Scout
II	*Arms*	Lightning Energy Harvesting Plant
II	*Ovary*	Genetic Code Radio-Transmission Center
II	*Egg*	Genetic Sample Repository
II	*Capillary*	Population-Control Gate
III	*Bowels*	Temple of Voluntary Suicide And Cremation
III	*Anus*	Crematorium Exhaust Vent
III	*Colon*	Material and Refuse Depository
III	*Eardrum*	Pasthuman Heartbeat Monitor
III	*Phallus*	Monument to the Unnecessary
III	*Marrow*	Museum of Extinction
III	*Skin + Bloodstream*	Surface of Eroded Earthly Terrain + River Sanctuary of Ritual Cleansing

SPECULATIVE EPISODES AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

Episode I: Change the Earth
Episode II: Preserve Humanity
Episode III: Accept Extinction

As espoused within the texts of *Isotopia*'s Genesis, the project plays out a fiction of the future, a hypothetically posthumous exploration — through three-dimensional architectural representational model and two-dimensional pictorial documentation — of the Human struggle with Earthly corporeality and inhabitation, highlighting different phases of the ordeal in the above-stated episodic form.

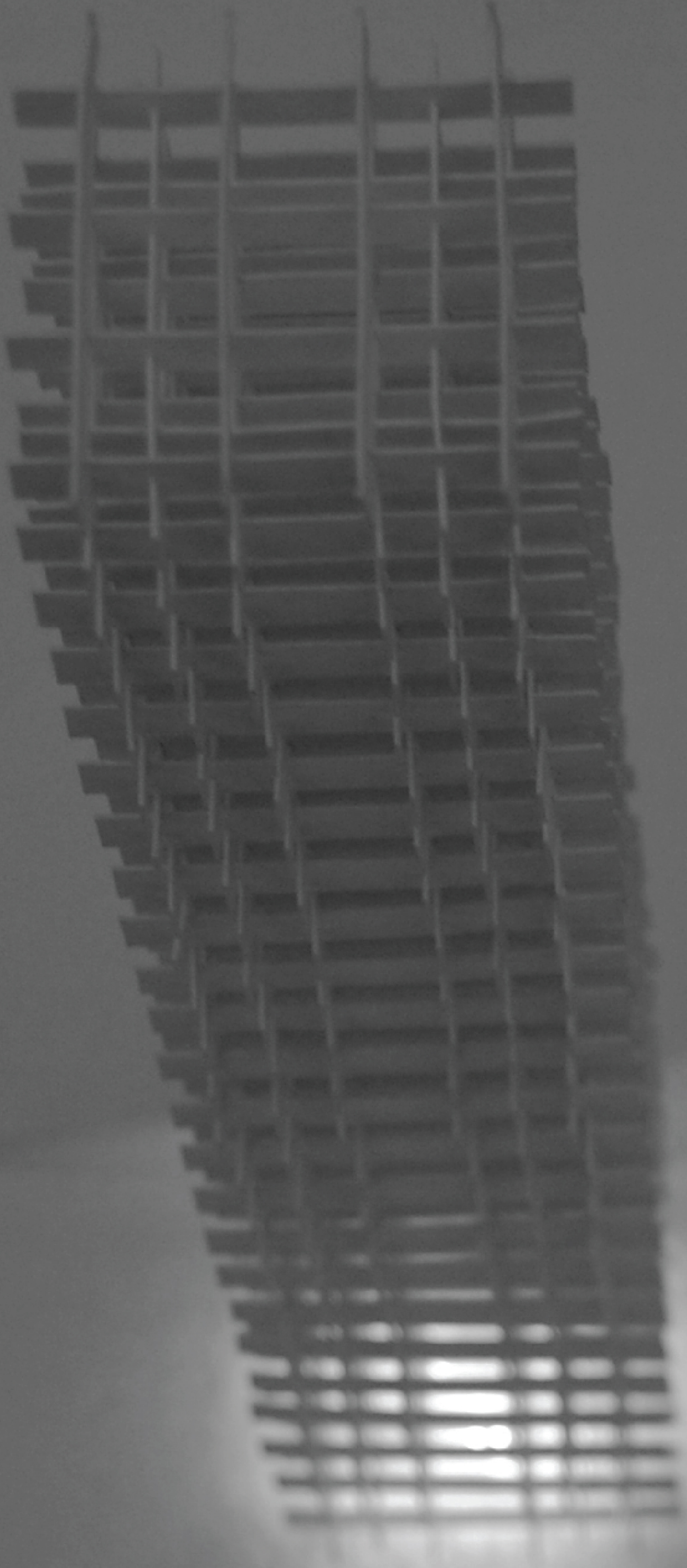
Underlying these statements are three ontological assumptions as to the nature of Human Being:

A. *Miraculous*: The current condition of Human existence and evolution on Earth is beholden to the unique and miraculous symbiosis between the tangibles of the Body and the intangibles of the Mind.

B. *Transient*: The planet Earth is in constant flux, such that Humanity's current form of corporeal existence on Earth cannot be viewed as permanent, and can only be understood as transient.

C. *Illusory*: Understanding the constructs of time and space as constraints of the Mind-Body paradigm, this project views the current state of Human existence as temporary, impermanent, and illusory.

Each of *Isotopia*'s different organs or body parts can be understood as evolutionary byproducts of these projected episodes and existing underlying assumptions concerning the Earth, Humanity, Architecture, and Culture. The episodes overlap chronologically, as such some of the organs would be diversified in function, or repurposed over time. The following list depicts the episodes in which each organ or body part would be initially spawned.



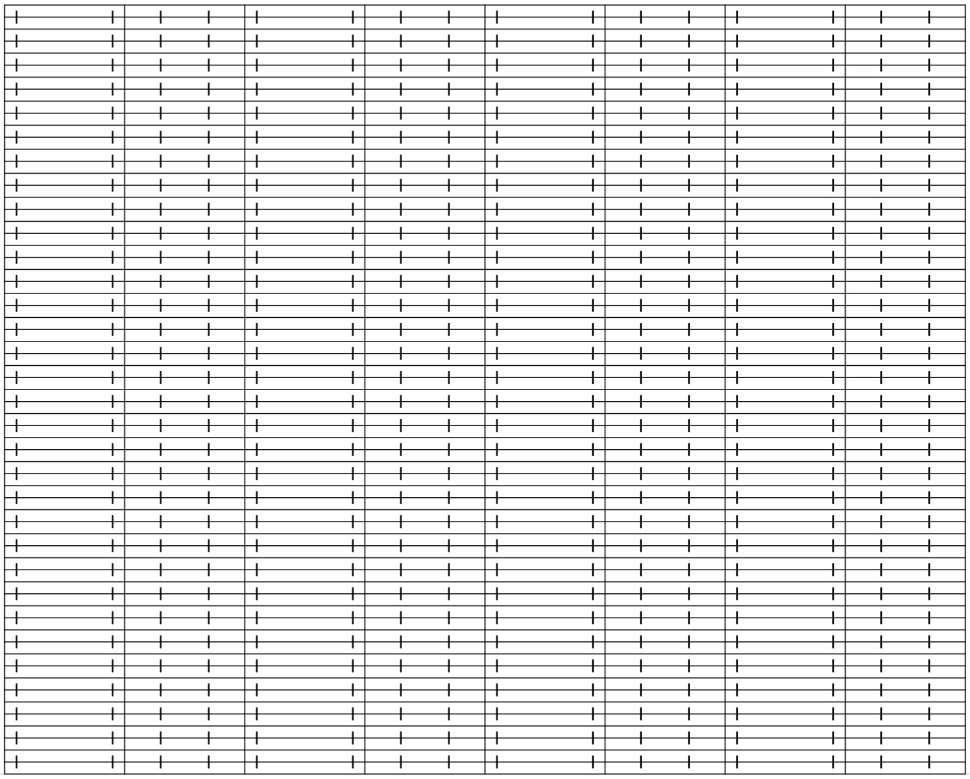
SPINE

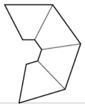
AXIAL POLARITY MEGA-STRUCTURE

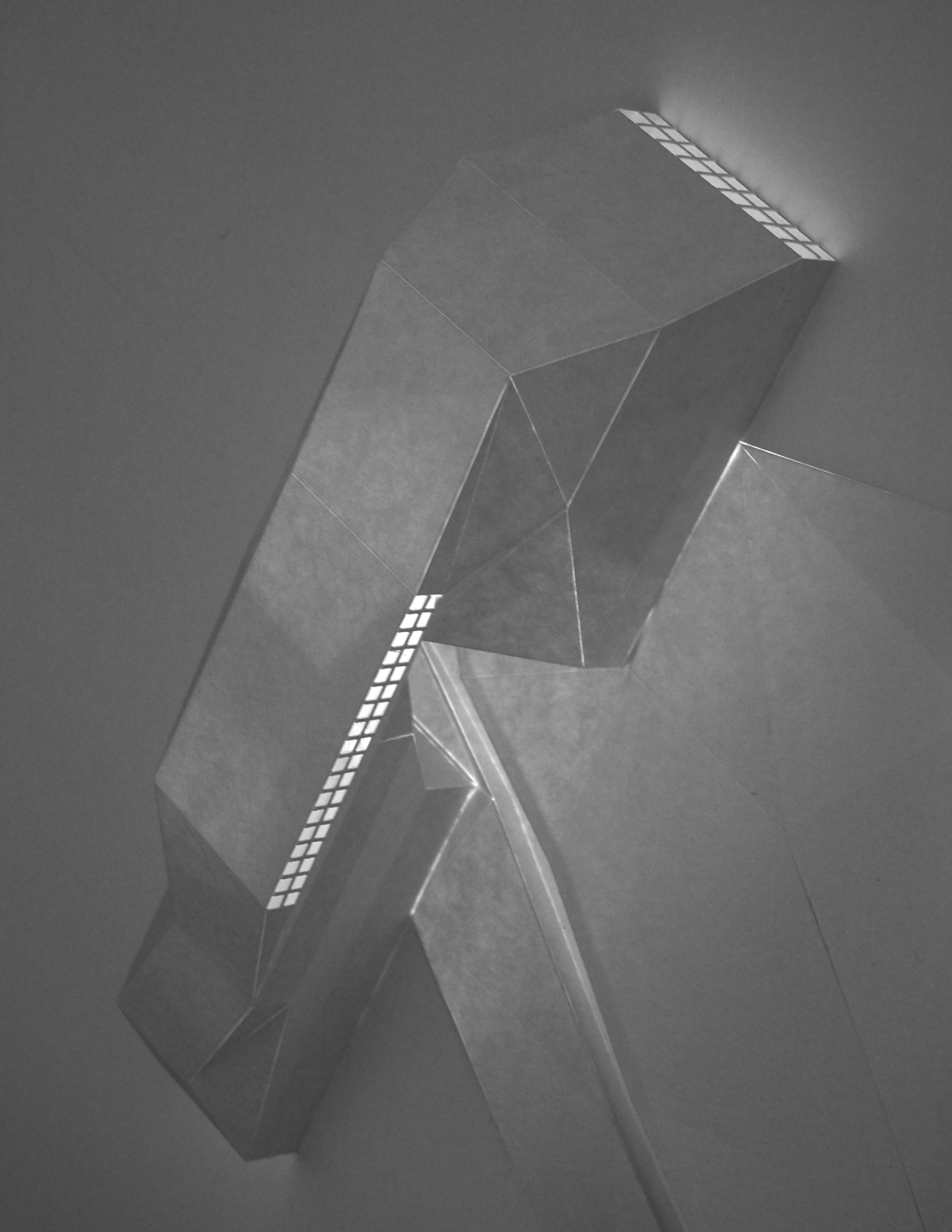
From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 6:

Fed from the incoming spoils of my mouth, / My ***Spine*** *grew in length prodigiously. / A construct born / Out of the pasthumans' sense of self-worth / And subsequent tendency towards self-preservation, / My spine was built as a mega-structure tower / Of stacked interlocking metal planes / For the purpose of shifting the Earth's polarity / And altering its climate. / At its base, the foundation of the volume / Was installed with a mega-scale kiln, / With the weight of the volume of the tower / Acting to accelerate the tower's downward melt / Even as the tower's upward construction persisted. / The pasthumans desperately hoped / That the resulting magnetic force / Would preserve the Earth / As an inhabitable home. / Construction on my spine / Was never intended to be discontinued: / The pasthuman desire for self-preservation / Had been presumed to be a lasting Human trait.*

My spine was initially constructed during Episode I [Change the Earth]*, and stands as an ostentatious reminder of the period. Later, during the desperation of Episode II* [Preserve Humanity]*, many pasthumans found themselves in dire need of preservation. Some even chose to find refuge in the dangerous and dynamic tower, constantly relocating vertically upwards as the building melted downward. A curiously spatially constant culture of nomadicism was spawned, and Humanity managed to persevere onward in time. At an inevitably futile point in the future, during Episode III* [Accept Extinction]*, an alternative arose to the Followers of the Bowels at the Temple of Crematoria, out of both inspiration and reaction. Inhabitants of the tower would establish permanent residency within one of the sinking modules of the interlocking planes, and accept their fate as the tower slowly melted into the ground, adding their bodies in sacrifice to the lava that they desperately hoped would someday Change the Earth (a remnant of hope sustained in Episode I). My spine, now static and barren, stands as an equal to my more self-conscious phallus, as a lasting monument to Human liberty.*







MOUTH

MATERIAL-INTAKE PORT + WEAPONS ARMORY

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 4:

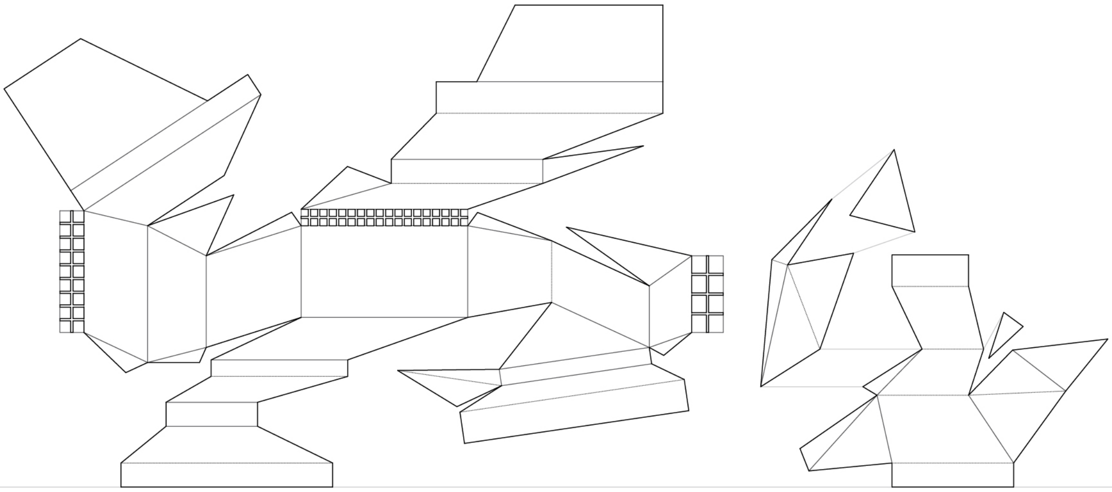
*My Capillary to the north / And **Mouth** to the south / Acted as circulatory pinch-points / For my Body. / Without the temporary structures / That had previously been made / Both above and below water / For inter-island transportation, / The island became a space / Of privileged and precious access: / This was an urban condition prophesized / In Reverend Koolhaas' 1972 sermon / For the Exodus of London / And from his study of a divided Berlin. / Through the teeth of my mouth / You can see that only a shell remains / Of the former material-intake port / And weapons-defense armory. / Built to assist / In the controversial construction of my Body, / The port controlled access to the island / Through the grand arch of my mouth / And its sea level teeth. / My capillary to the north / Flows through a monolithic gate volume / Which spans in width / From what was 173rd to 178th Street.*

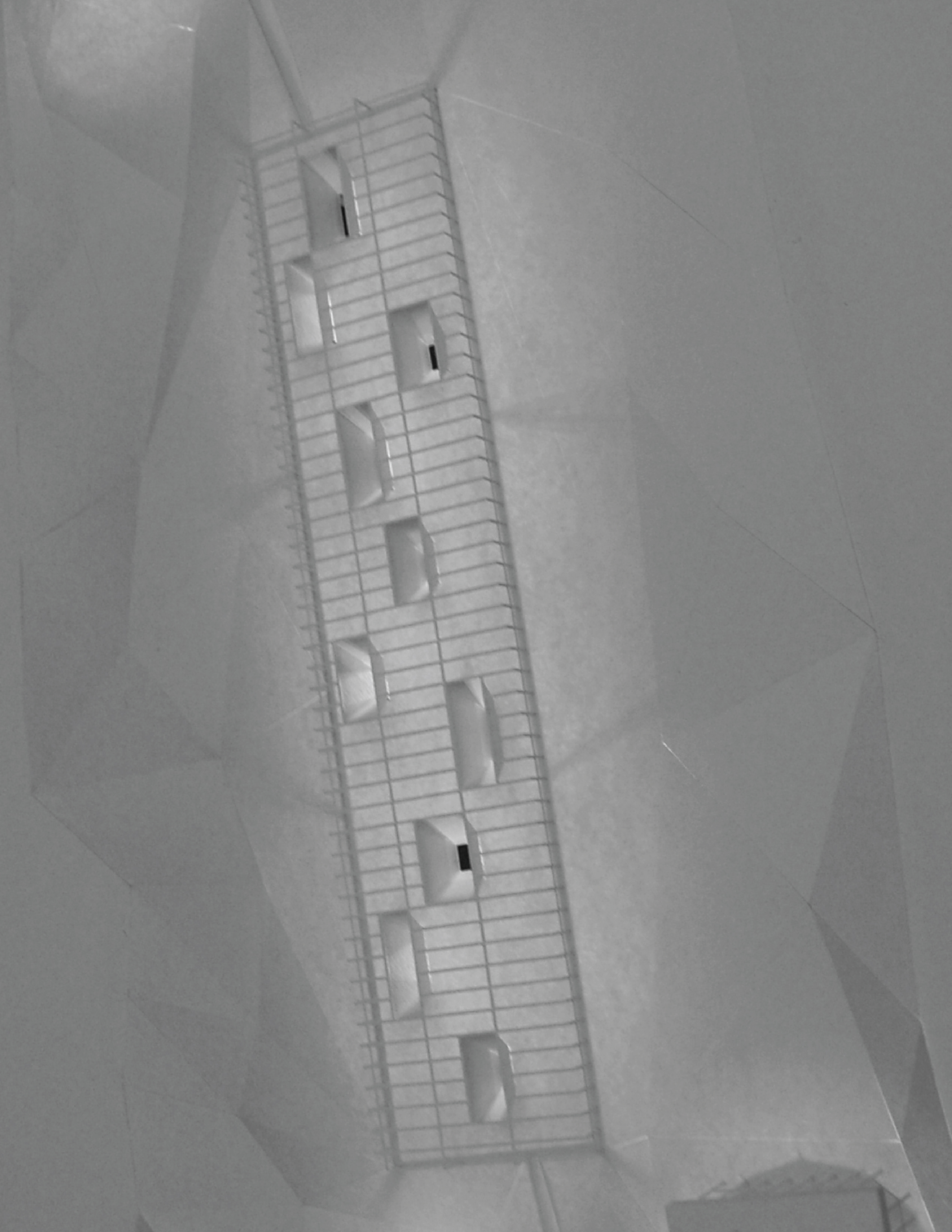
My mouth was initially constructed during Episode I [Change the Earth]*, as a necessary organ of the pasthumans' frantic Mission to maintain and uphold the Earth as a viable Home. The sudden increase in material intake demanded not only a greater port capacity, but also increased defensive fortification from factions of pasthumans who were unaligned with, or envious of the Mission. The need for defensive fortification increased considerably during Episode II* [Preserve Humanity]*, as the Earth proved to be increasingly inhospitable to the unique and fragile constitution of the Human Body. Under the force of unexpected pressures, my mouth was often inhabited for impromptu extracurricular programs, i.e. disasters, emergencies, evacuations, etc. Then, during Episode III* [Accept Extinction]*, my mouth was abandoned as an unnecessary relic of past strife and struggle.*

Reverends Remment Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp et al.,
Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture rendering (1972).

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1994, originally 1978).

Martin van Schaik and Otakar Macel [ed.], *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-'76*
(New York, NY: Prestel Publishing, 2005).





RIBCAGE + STOMACHS

DEFENSIVE SHELTER + WATER-COLLECTION RESERVOIRS

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 3:

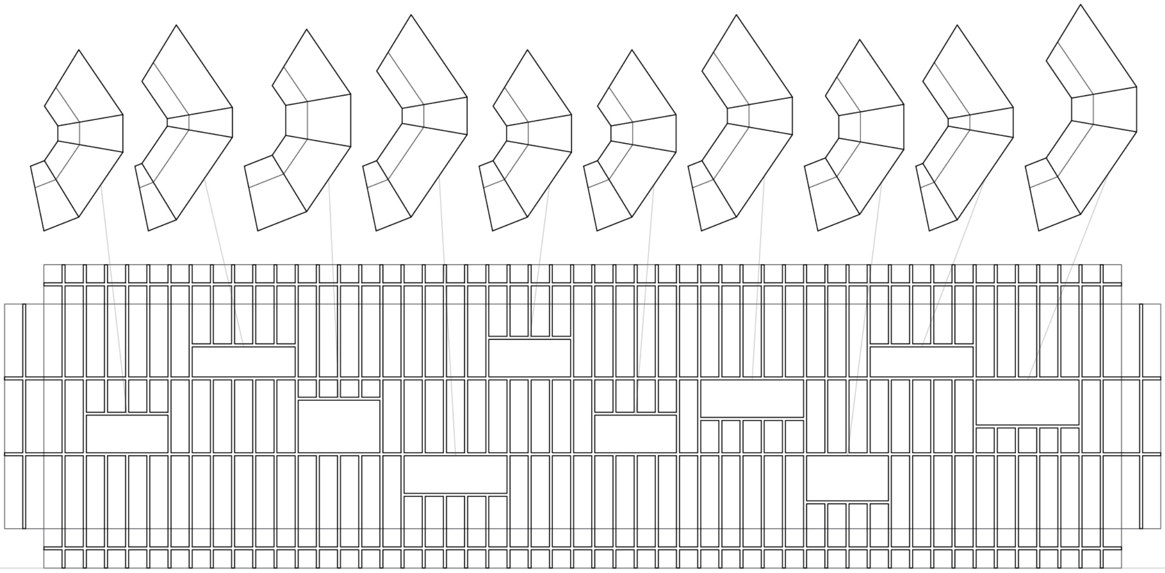
*My **Ribcage** is situated in the location / Where the pasthumans previously referred to / As Central Park. / Its skeletal configuration / Continued the grid of the Old City / Into this once sanctified void-space of the park / As though it were a space reserved / And waiting for a worthy and necessary vehicle. / Aside from a set of barren water-collection **Stomachs**, / My ribcage is no longer responsible / For housing vital organs, / Though it once served the pasthumans / As the structure for a defensive shelter. / After the Deliriously dense buildup of the island's space, / The park became the last refuge / For a building of greater permanence / To be built without obstruction. / As an anthropomorphic skeletal artifact / Of pasthuman existence, / My ribcage pays homage / To Reverend Rossi's Cemetery of San Cataldo. / This was the first of my Body parts to be built. / For the construction of my other parts, / Sacrifices of the Old City had to be made / In order for me to grow.*

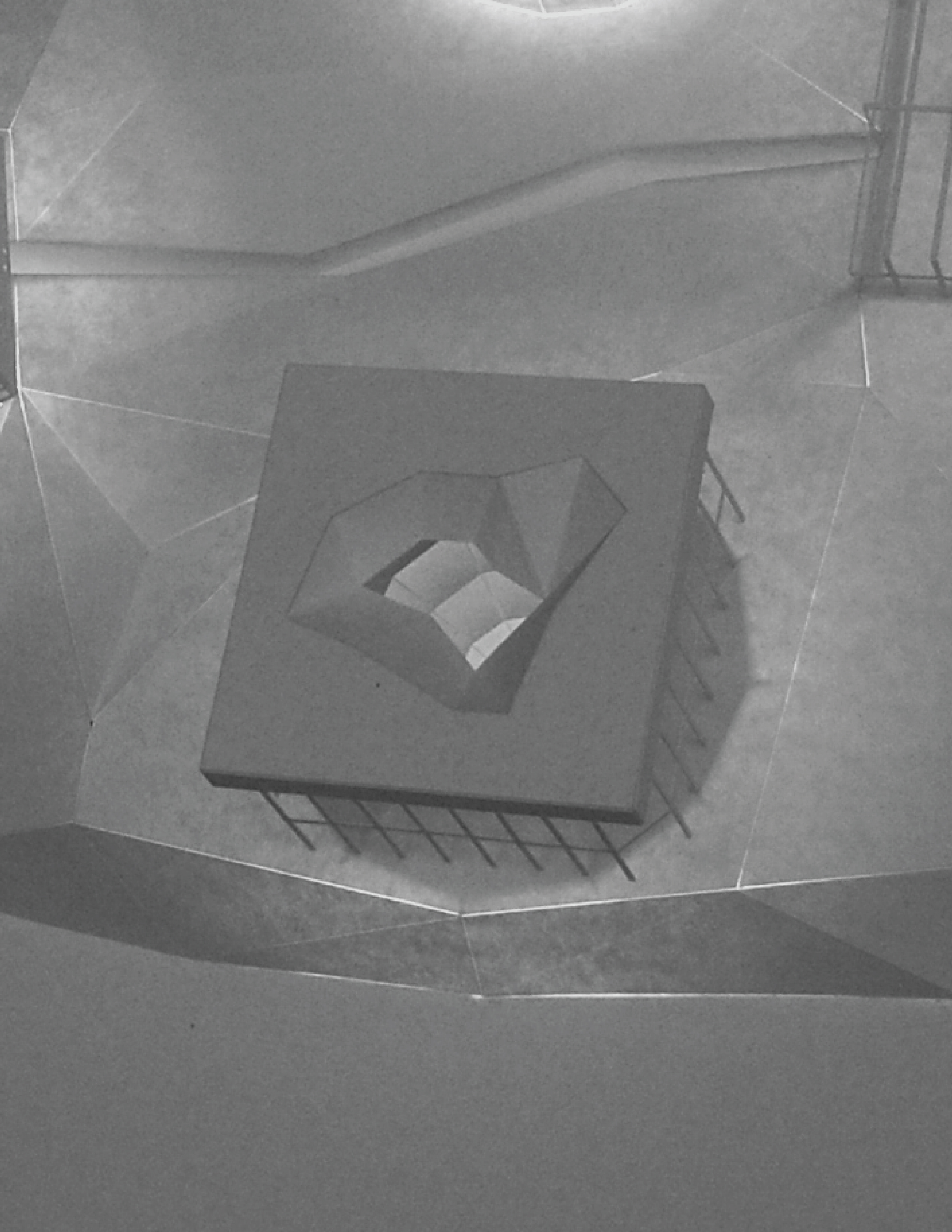
My ribcage was initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity], *as the epicentric emblem of the Episode's Mission. My ribcage was one of the first consensual diversions of labor and material away from the Mission of Episode I* [Change the Earth]. *The water-collection reservoirs of my stomachs were constructed as an alternative to my ribcage's desalination water-purification system, which proved to be an unfortunately high maintenance and too easily outdated fixture in the project's earlier periods. Within the now-crumbled fortress walls of my ribcage, the culture of pasthuman self-preservation thrived and the Mission of Episode II flourished, as the pasthumans fed graciously from the precipitation collected in my un-weathering stomachs. As they finally confronted Episode III* [Accept Extinction], *the purpose of these organs was abandoned and the structural infill was dismantled, to be put towards their newer Mission.*

Reverend Aldo Rossi, *San Cataldo Cemetery* site plan (c.1975).

Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Drawings* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 2008).

Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Progetti e Disegni 1962-1979*
(New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1979).





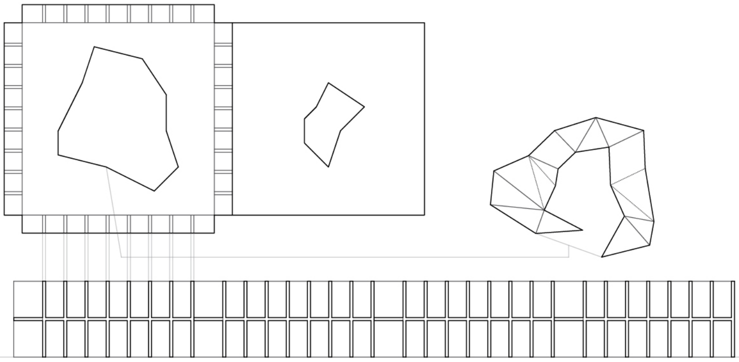
PUPIL

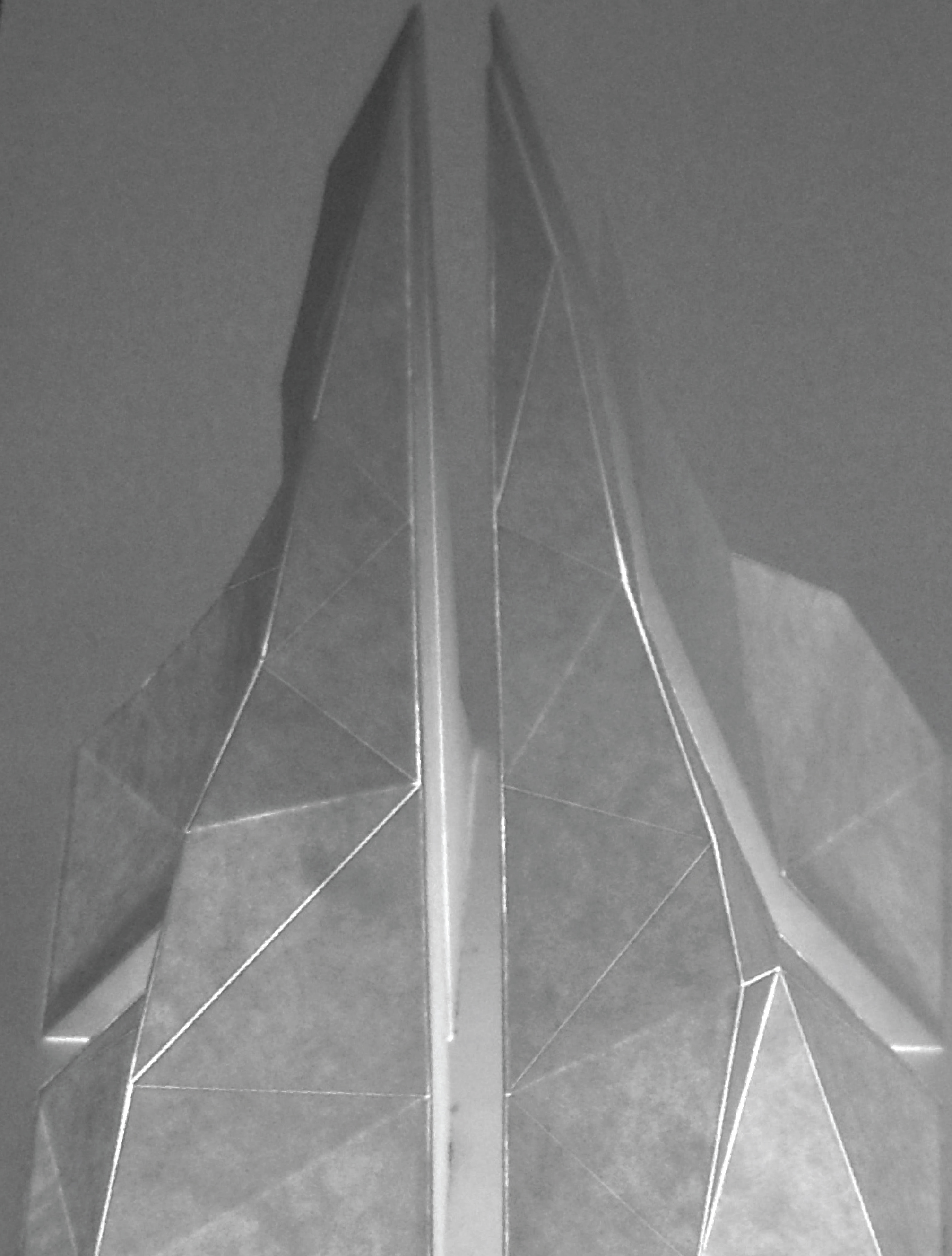
ROAMING EMERGENCY RESCUE SCOUT

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 7:

*Deposits of my Marrow serve as museums / To house and categorize / Remaining species of corporeal life. / The museums stand empty and eroded. / My **Pupil** would roam far and wide, / In desperate search for remaining life. / Though still capable, / It no longer needs to search. / Meanwhile, my Eardrum would sit and listen, / To confirm the mere subsistence / Of a remaining heartbeat. / These are among the few buildings left / Which still fulfill the purposes they were built for. / They stand fallow, static, and in silence.*

My pupil was initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity], *as a vehicle engaged in the Mission to locate, protect, and recover the unlucky pasthumans that somehow found themselves outside of the protection of my Architecture. As my pupil was programmed with the autonomy to continue its specified Mission, when the pasthumans confronted Episode III* [Accept Extinction], *my pupil carried on its Episode II Mission, like an involuntary reflex similar to that of an eye blinking. As you might expect, this upset the more zealous pasthuman Missionaries of Episode III: it has even been rumored that some of them considered reopening my mouth as an offensive artillery center to shoot down my supposedly sacrilegious pupil. No matter though, my pupil bravely carried on with its Mission until my eardrum signaled it home, for it could hear that my pupil needed to search no longer.*





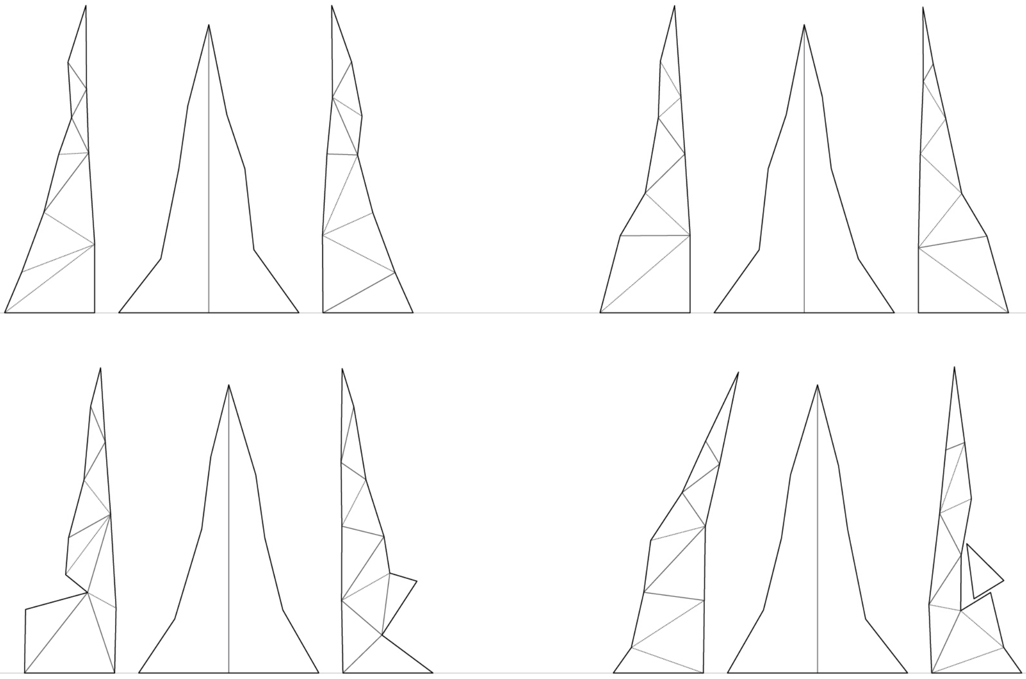
ARMS

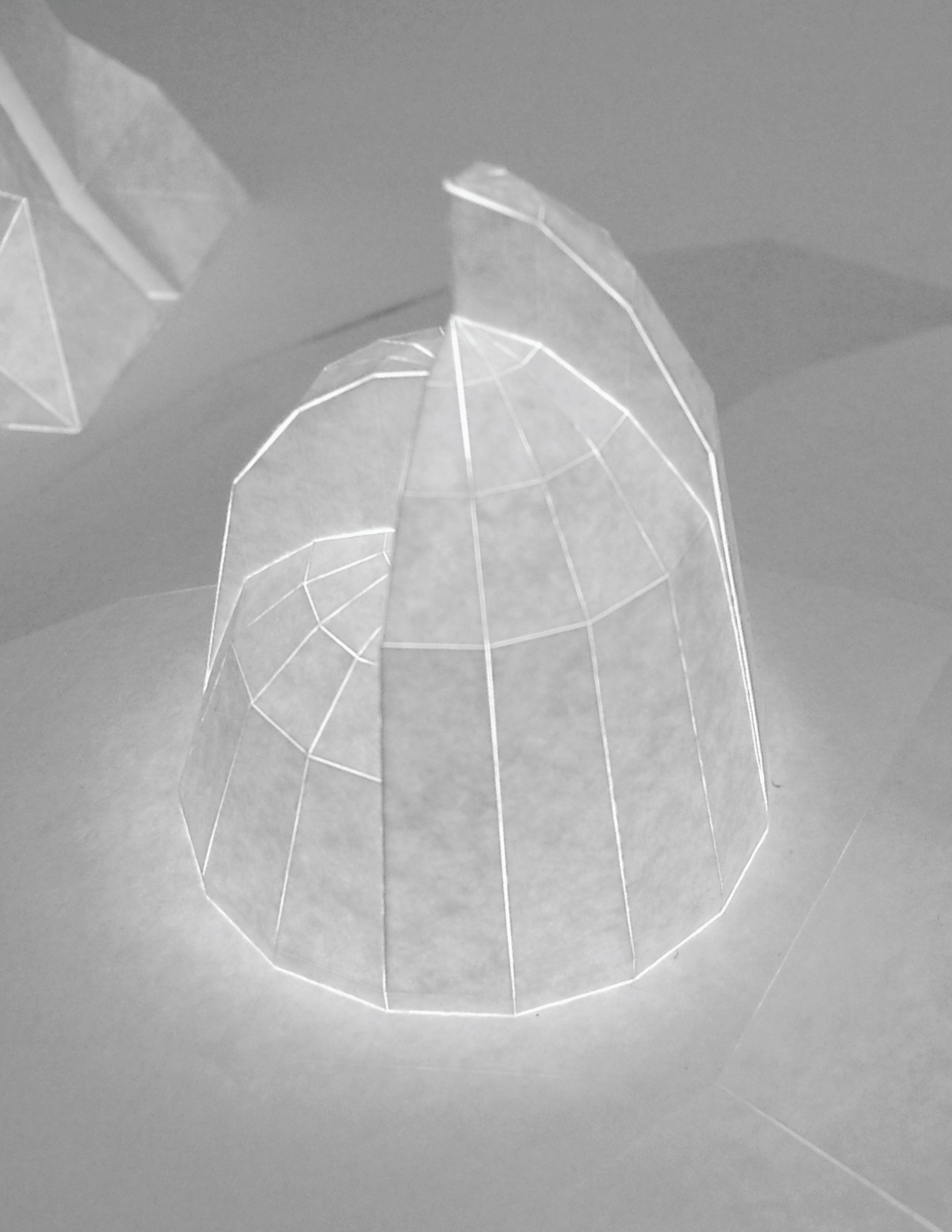
LIGHTNING ENERGY HARVESTING PLANT

From Scripture, Part 2 “Prophecy” Section 3 Verse 13:

Still feeding my ovary and my egg, / My ***Arms*** *reach to the sky in a spiritual stance, / Praying for lightning energy to harness. / The Earth has responded so frequently / And with such great fervor, / I can no longer recall how high they used to reach / Before the melting began.*

My arms were initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity]*, at a point in the pasthumans' journey when they realized that they would need a truly long-term source of energy to serve their Mission. Sometimes I think that I am able to dream about what they looked like when they were first built. I visualize them as four shining metallic towers: immeasurably tall and slender, equally spaced, and perfectly orthogonal. Though, I get the feeling that my memory exaggerates their height. In any case, during Episode III* [Accept Extinction]*, my arms were of welcome assistance to the new Mission. The energy absorbed by my arms was concentrated towards the parts of my Body that would serve to memorialize pasthuman existence, as part of their Mission to strive towards letting go of their corporeal selves and transcend their physical bodies. They found solace in the knowledge that their pasthuman genetic codes would be preserved and transmitted via my ovary and my egg, and were grateful for the energy that my arms provided for this purpose.*





OVARY

GENETIC CODE RADIO-TRANSMISSION CENTER

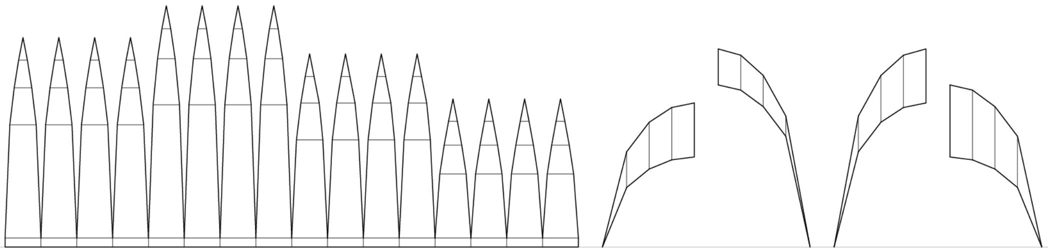
From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 10:

*Speaking of which, / My **Ovary** and Egg exist in corollary: / As a radio transmission hub / And a sample repository center / For the preservation and posterity / Of the pasthumans' genetic codes, / Memorializing their unique fingerprints. / The figures acquiesce to the preachings / Of Reverend Boullée and his monumental cenotaphs, / As platonic commemorative mega-structures / Idolizing the last of the pasthumans.*

My ovary was initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity]*, bearing the hope that other sentient beings in the universe would receive these transmissions, and facilitate a setting to enact the codes into a form of being, in order to continue on with a regenerated corporeal Humanity. This was based on the hopeful belief system that there would exist other beings in the universe with both the desire and the capacity to do such a thing.* [See the brief discussion of Carl Sagan's "Pioneer Plaque" in Part 4C, "On Situating the Project Relative to Human Beings"] *During Episode III* [Accept Extinction]*, my ovary became somewhat of a tragic comedy to some, but it also stood as an icon of lasting comfort to others, who could more simply and gracefully embrace their fate with the knowledge that a symbolic part of them was traveling through the universe, into the heavens.*

Reverend Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Cenotaph* section (c.1780).

Helen Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture*
(New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1976).



EGG

GENETIC SAMPLE REPOSITORY

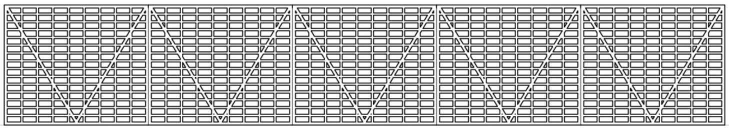
From Scripture, Part 2 “Prophecy” Section 3 Verse 10:

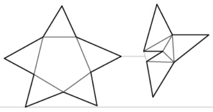
Speaking of which, / My Ovary and ***Egg*** *exist in corollary: / As a radio transmission hub / And a sample repository center / For the preservation and posterity / Of the pasthumans' genetic codes, / Memorializing their unique fingerprints. / The figures acquiesce to the preachings / Of Reverend Boullée and his monumental cenotaphs, / As platonic commemorative mega-structures / Idolizing the last of the pasthumans.*

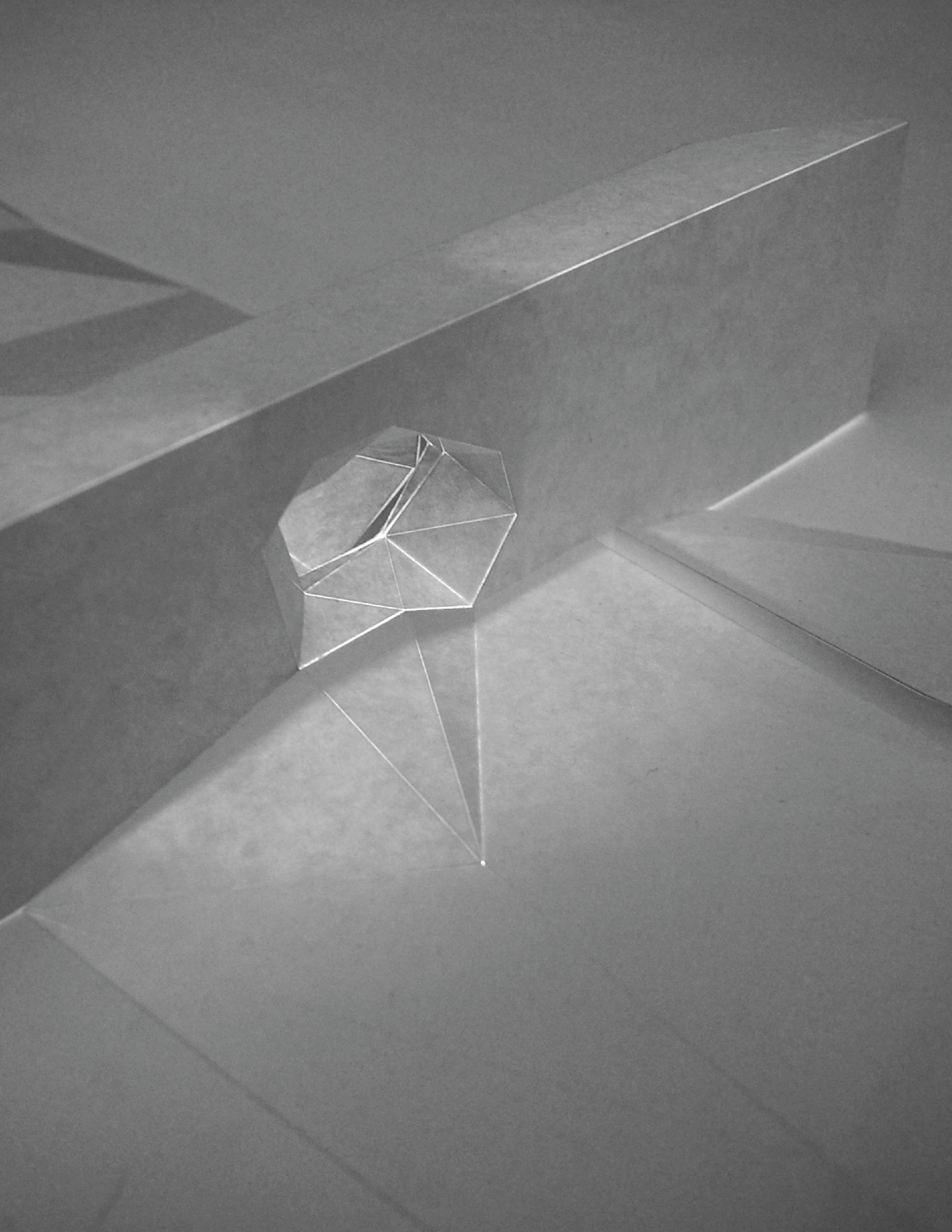
My egg was initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity]*, with the desire for other sentient beings to someday have the opportunity to discover the repository, and facilitate a setting to formulate its samples into being, continuing on with corporeal Humanity (and the Mission). Again, this was based on the hopeful belief system that there would exist other beings in the universe with the desire and capacity to do so.* [See the brief discussion of Carl Sagan's “Pioneer Plaque” in Part 4C, “On Situating the Project Relative to Human Beings”] *During Episode III* [Accept Extinction]*, the preservative nature of my egg made it a controversial construct, but a consensus was established: Followers of the Bowels at the Temple of Crematoria had a right to deposit a sample of genes, in the formation of a monumental mausoleum of pasthuman existence. It stands as such.*

Reverend Étienne-Louis Boullée, *Cenotaph* section (c.1780).

Helen Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture*
(New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1976).







CAPILLARY

POPULATION-CONTROL GATE

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 4:

*My **Capillary** to the north / And Mouth to the south / Acted as circulatory pinch-points / For my Body. / Without the temporary structures / That had previously been made / Both above and below water / For inter-island transportation, / The island became a space / Of privileged and precious access: / This was an urban condition prophesized / In Reverend Koolhaas' 1972 sermon / For the Exodus of London / And from his study of a divided Berlin. / Through the teeth of my mouth / You can see that only a shell remains / Of the former material-intake port / And weapons-defense armory. / Built to assist / In the controversial construction of my Body, / The port controlled access to the island / Through the grand arch of my mouth / And its sea level teeth. / My capillary to the north / Flows through a monolithic gate volume / Which spans in width / From what was 173rd to 178th Street.*

My capillary was initially constructed during Episode II [Preserve Humanity], *at a time when access to the island of my Body had become precious and sought-after to any of the pasthumans who found themselves outside of the protection of my limited shelter and amenities. However, in their near future, in an ironic twist of fate, the population of pasthumans dwindled dismally, and they panicked to provide sanctuary for whomever they could. The gate of limitation became a gate of prerogative. It was during these trying times that the pasthumans were forced to confront Episode III* [Accept Extinction]. *At this point my capillary's existence was of no real consequence: it was symbolic; it was trivial.*

Reverends Remment Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp et al.,
Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture rendering (1972).

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1994, originally 1978).

Martin van Schaik and Otakar Macel [ed.], *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-'76*
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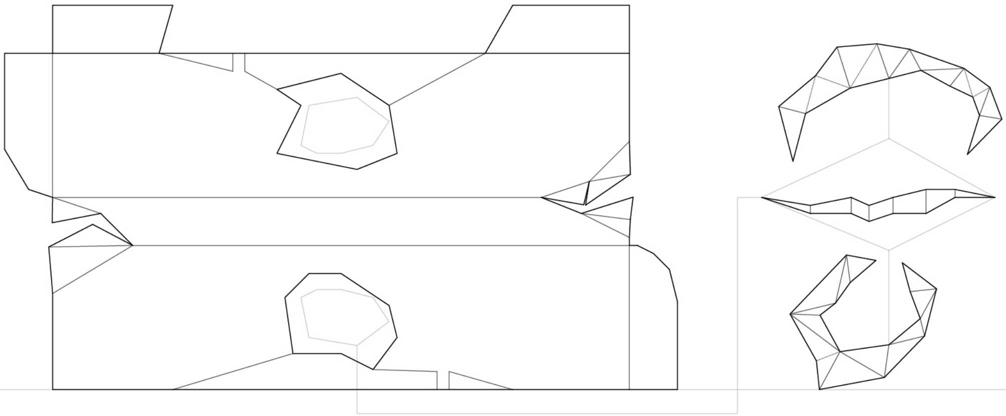
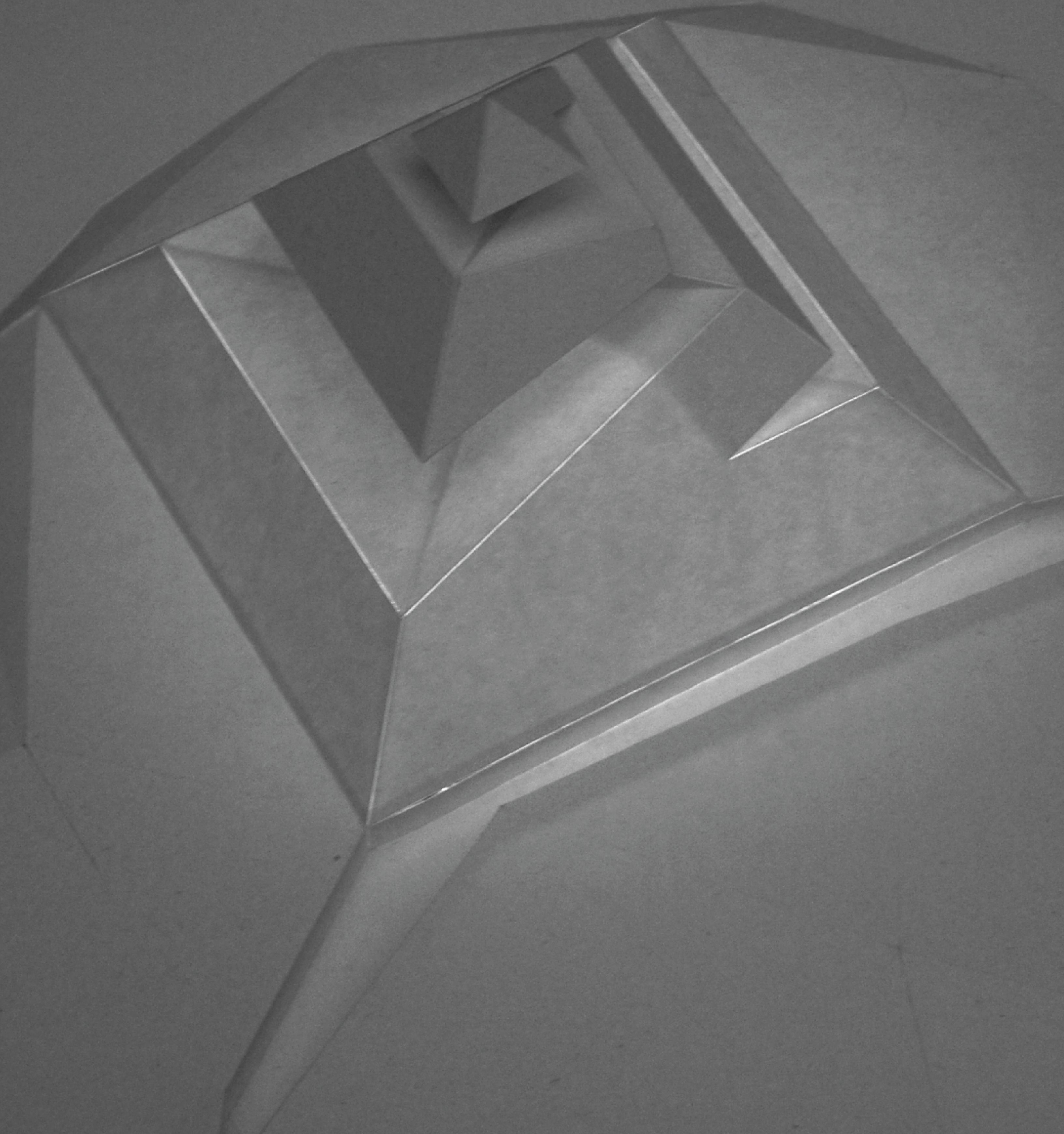




BOWELS

TEMPLE OF VOLUNTARY SUICIDE AND CREMATION

From Scripture, Part 2 “Prophecy” Section 3 Verse 11:

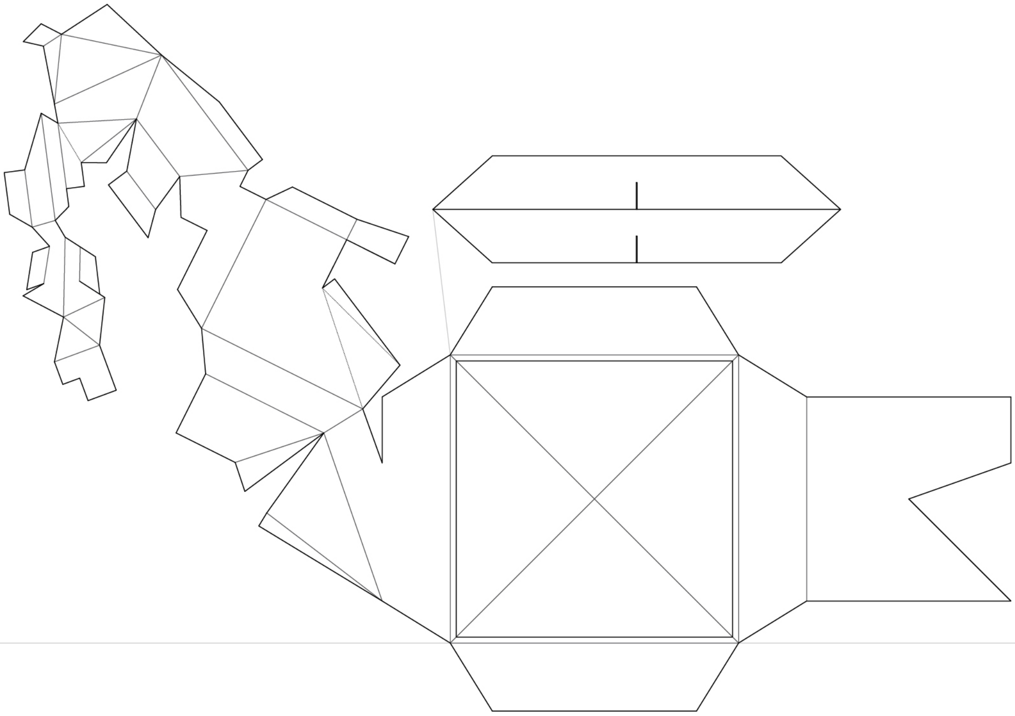
When the pasthumans eventually began / To voluntarily accept their fate, / A ritual was initiated. / They decided that the desperate remaining / Had no right to consume their flesh / For their own selfish purposes. / And so, one would forfeit / To float down my bloodstream, / As cells through a vessel / Inevitably reaching my ***Bowels****, / The Temple of Crematoria, / Which houses the utmost / Of sacred ceremonial spaces. / The seemingly esoteric nature / Of formal specificity in my bowels is demonstrative / Of the complex series of spatial sequences / Developed to aid in this ritual-sacrifice. / Absorbing formal principles / Of Reverend Abraham's Tower of Wisdom, / The figure is imbued with a redolence / Of indescribable narratives / With respect to the end rites / Of pasthuman life.*

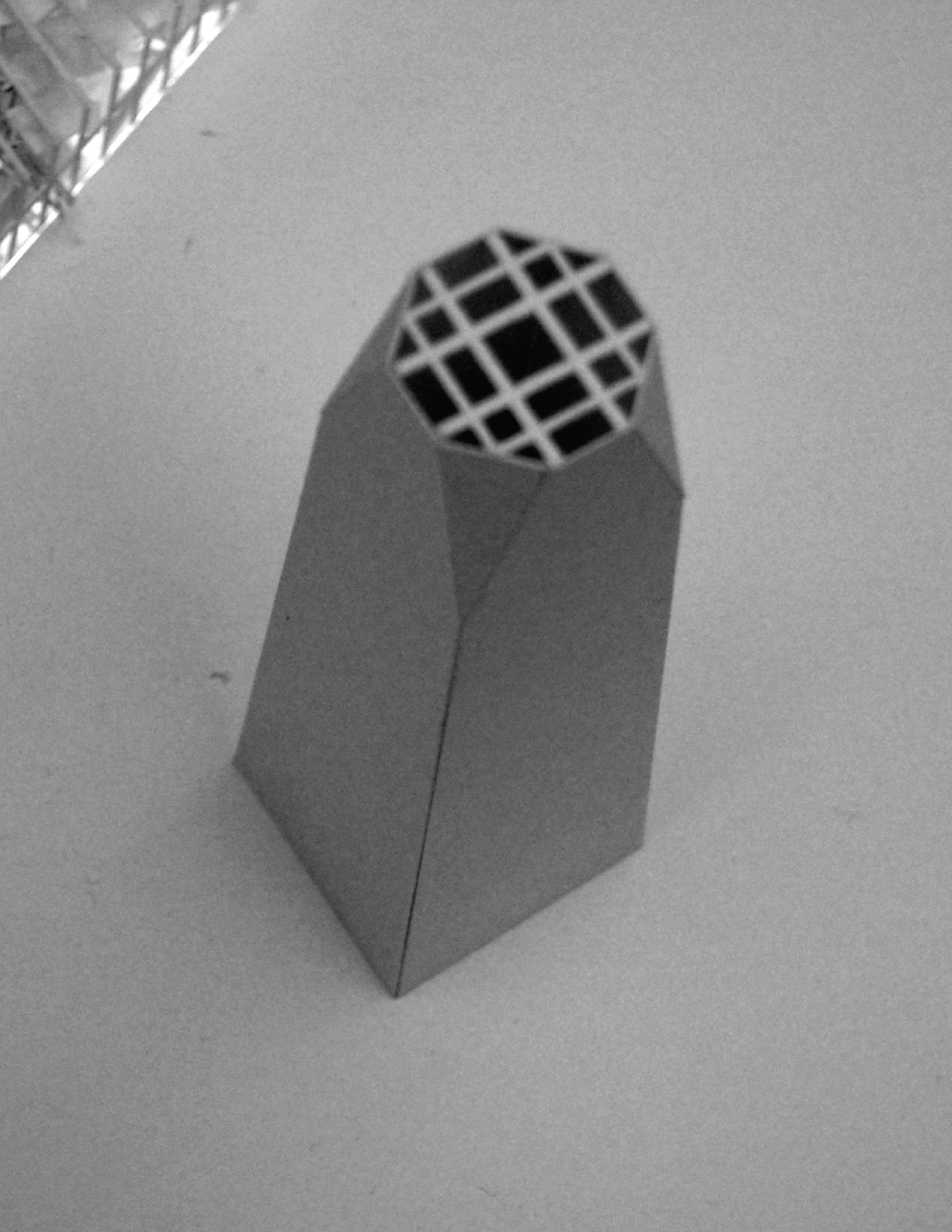
My bowels were initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, as the pinnacle of the pasthumans' final Mission. My bowels absorbed the seemingly unending flow of pasthumans from my bloodstream, and facilitated their transfiguration and evolution, to ventilate the inconsequential resultant matter of the process from my anus.*

Reverend Raimund Abraham, *Tower of Wisdom* rendering (c.1980).

Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

Raimund Abraham, *Ungebaut/Unbuilt*
(Bozen, Innsbruck: Galerie Museum, Galerie Krinzinger: 1986).





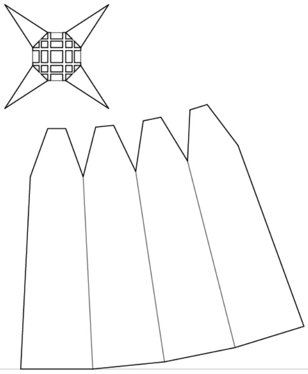
ANUS

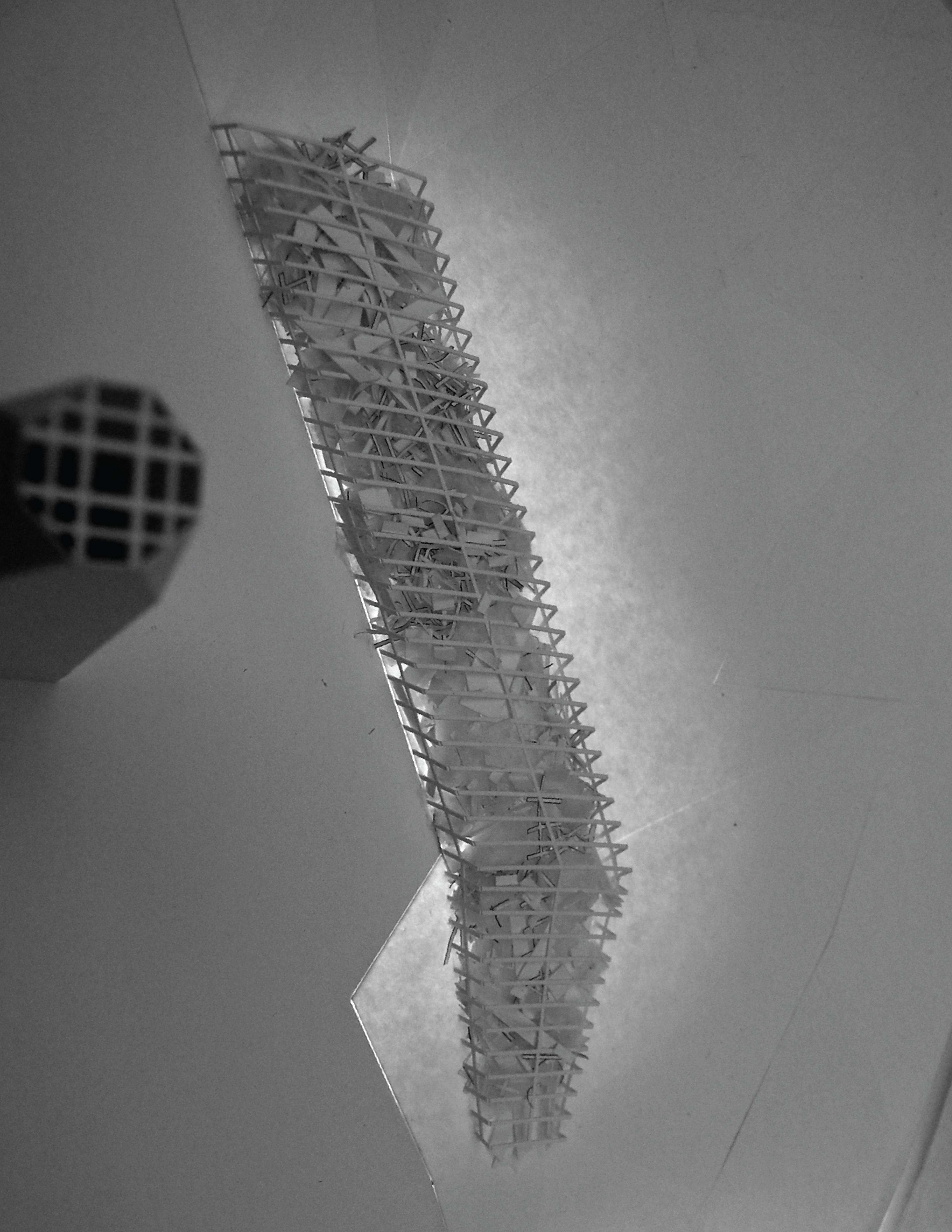
CREMATORIUM EXHAUST VENT

From Scripture, Part 2 “Prophecy” Section 3 Verse 12:

Lying venerably offshore, / My ***Anus*** *would excrete / The cremated gases of my bowels’ remains.*

My anus was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, as a final apparatus of release in the sacrificial system that centered around my divine digestive bowels.*





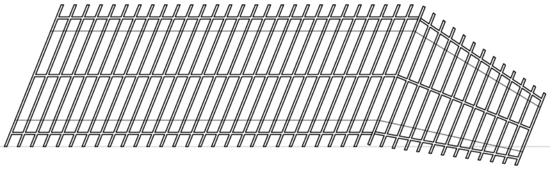
COLON

MATERIAL AND REFUSE DEPOSITORY

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 9:

I produce waste prodigiously. / My ***Colon*** *can attest to this statement, / Acting as a static cage / For the index of leftover process: / An index of existence. / As an artifact constructed / From 18 sheets of 18-by-24-inch paper, / I am both unique and reproducible.*

My colon was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, as this was a point when the pasthumans no longer felt predisposed to cleaning up after themselves, or disposing of their refuse. They felt comfortable to leave behind evidence of the everyday nature of their existence, even if others might be able to see it, and evaluate it, and pass judgment on them. The pasthumans were past the judgment of anyone but themselves.*



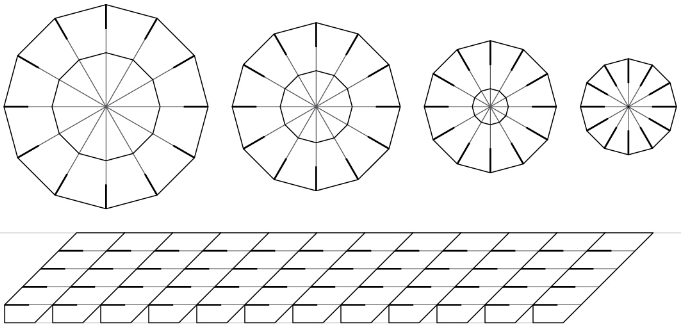
EARDRUM

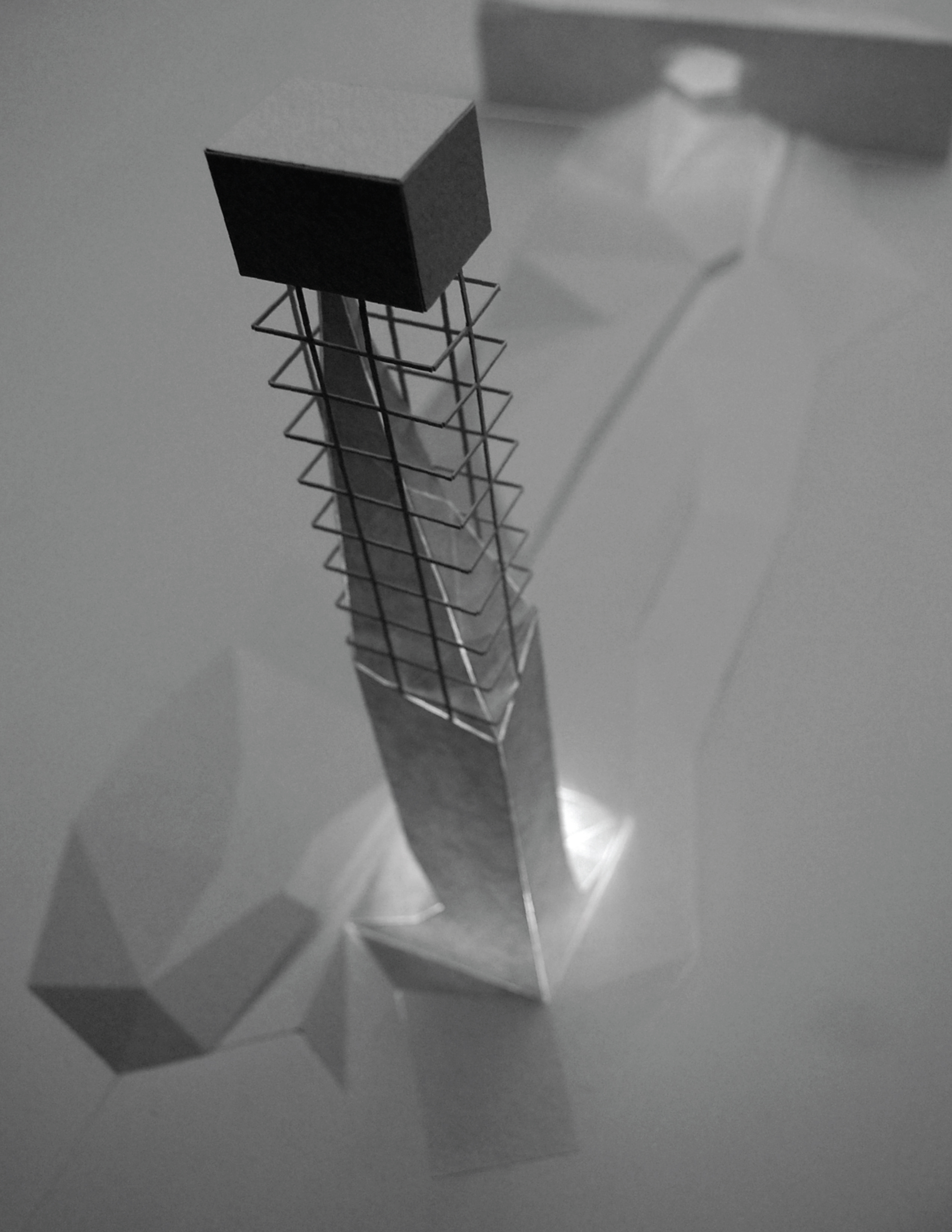
PASTHUMAN HEARTBEAT MONITOR

From Scripture, Part 2 “Prophecy” Section 3 Verse 7:

Deposits of my Marrow serve as museums / To house and categorize / Remaining species of corporeal life. / The museums stand empty and eroded. / My Pupil would roam far and wide, / In desperate search for remaining life. / Though still capable, / It no longer needs to search. / Meanwhile, my ***Eardrum*** *would sit and listen, / To confirm the mere subsistence / Of a remaining heartbeat. / These are among the few buildings left / Which still fulfill the purposes they were built for. / They stand fallow, static, and in silence.*

My eardrum was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, as a mechanism for tracking the inevitable accomplishment of their Mission. When it could no longer detect a pasthuman, it no longer needed to listen. This was its final purpose: to no longer need to listen.*





PHALLUS

MONUMENT TO THE UNNECESSARY

From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 8:

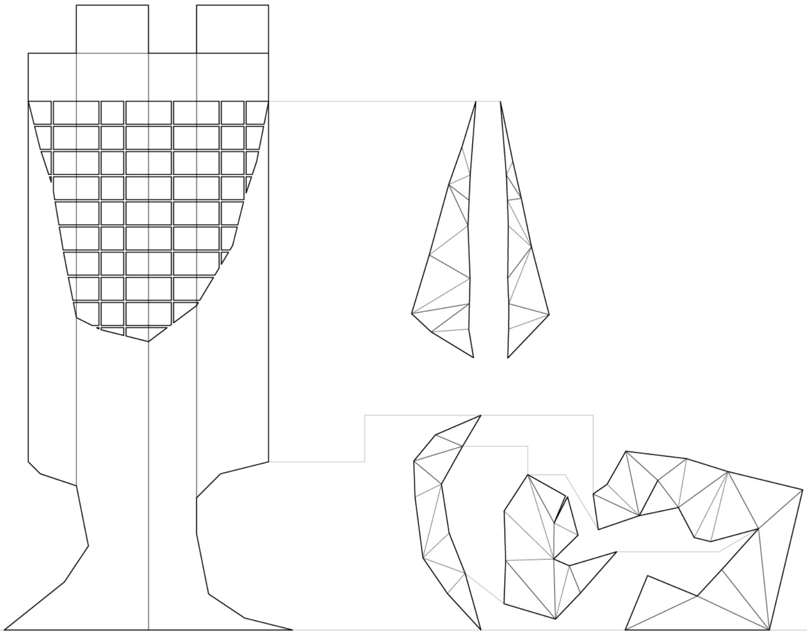
Where one would expect / The presence of a brain, / There stands a turgid ***Phallus****: / A monument to the unnecessary. / Helping itself to healthy rooting in the ground, / The stem of my phallus' facets and frames strain / To elevate its head to a needless / And perhaps excessive level in the air. / The focal point of the construct / Was a penthouse masturbatorium / Dedicated to principles / Of onanistic liberty and autonomy. / The figure proclaims to the observer, / "I am most certainly here," / In an exaggerated and self-satirical voice / Reminiscent of the anthropocentric universe / Inherent to Reverends Brodsky and Utkin's work.*

My phallus was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, when the pasthumans decided to allow their innermost desires and intentions to take form. To do this, they required a place that would not only provide them with a place to do so, but a place that could also act as a monument to its past occurrences. This is my phallus.*

Reverends Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin, *Island of Stability, a Sculpture Museum* presentation (c.1989).

Alexander Brodsky, *Brodsky & Utkin: Paper Architecture in the Real World* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1993).

Lois E. Nesbitt, *Brodsky & Utkin* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

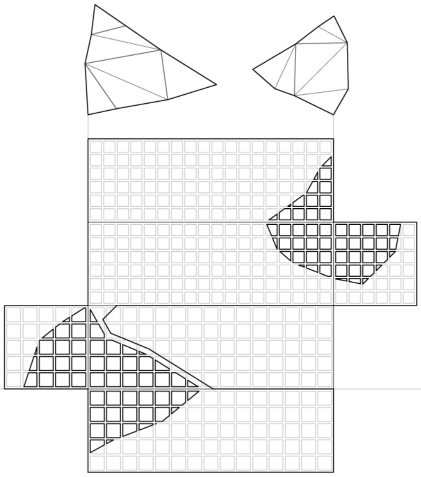


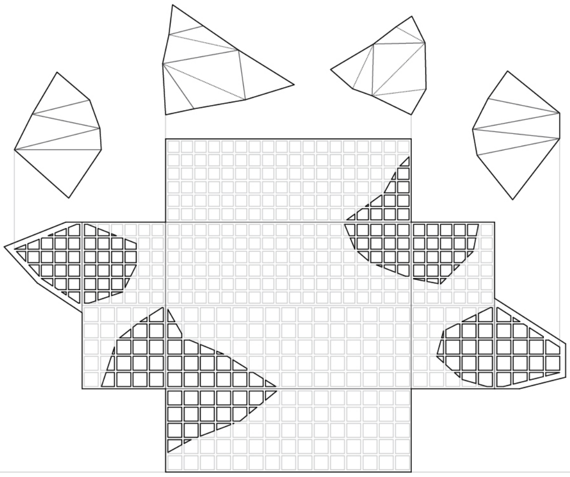
MARROW
MUSEUM OF EXTINCTION

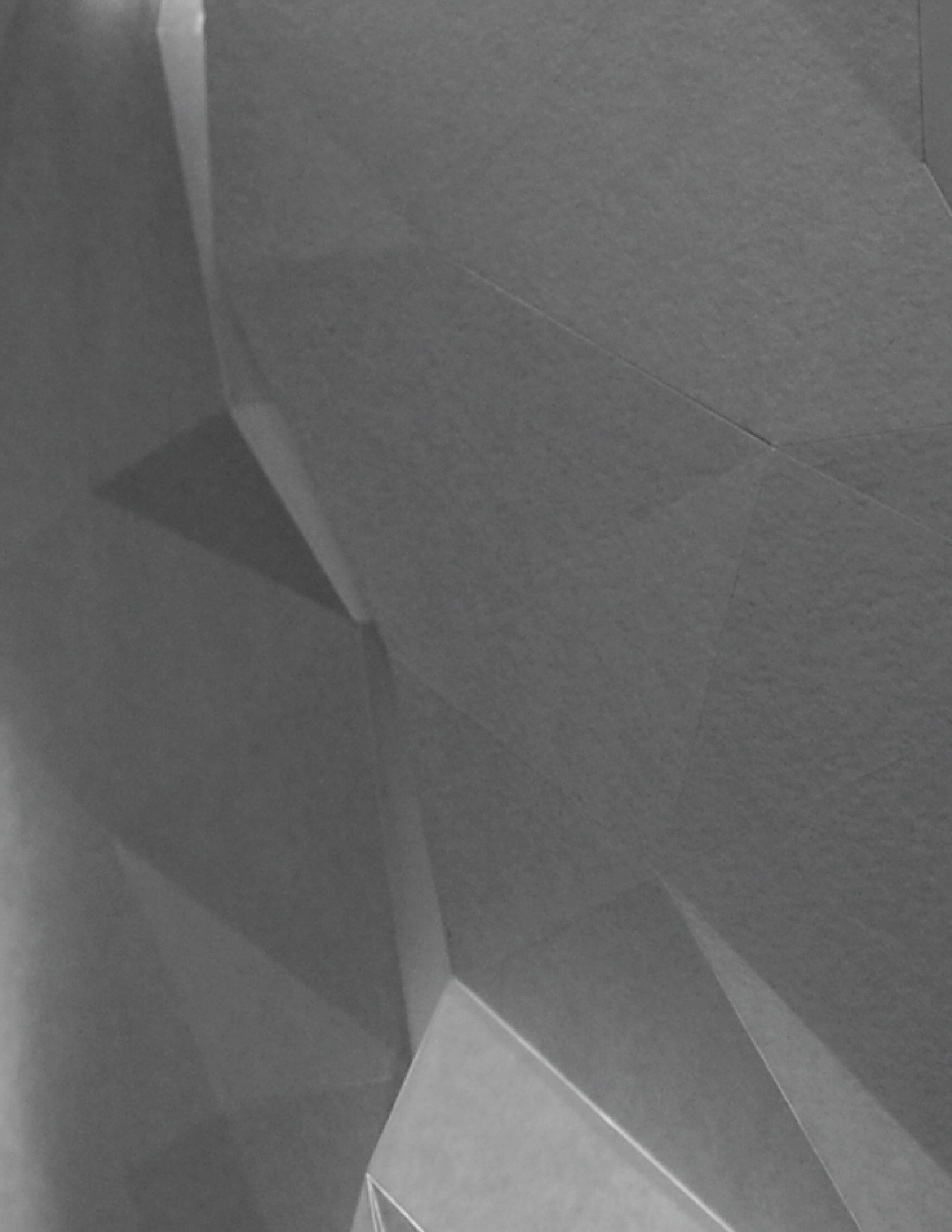
From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 7:

Deposits of my ***Marrow*** *serve as museums / To house and categorize / Remaining species of corporeal life. / The museums stand empty and eroded. / My Pupil would roam far and wide, / In desperate search for remaining life. / Though still capable, / It no longer needs to search. / Meanwhile, my Eardrum would sit and listen, / To confirm the mere subsistence / Of a remaining heartbeat. / These are among the few buildings left / Which still fulfill the purposes they were built for. / They stand fallow, static, and in silence.*

My marrow was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, as another outlet of the pasthumans' inner desires, a concretized index of a constant concern occupying their Mind: extinction.*







SKIN + BLOODSTREAM

SURFACE OF ERODED EARTHLY TERRAIN + RIVER SANCTUARY OF RITUAL CLEANSING

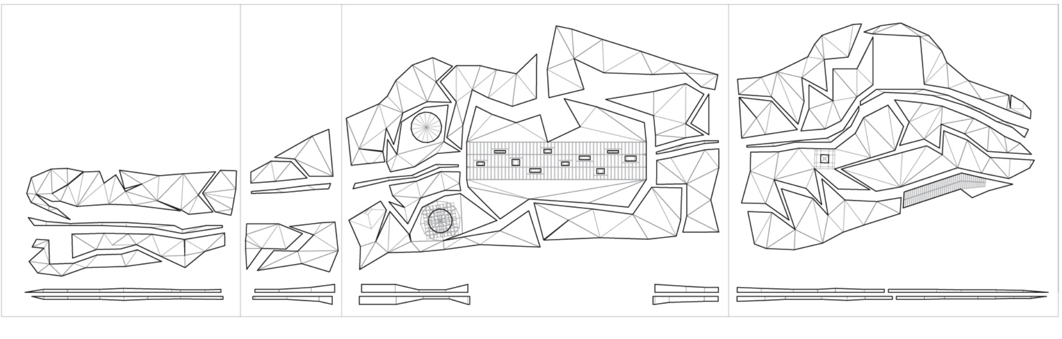
From Scripture, Part 2 "Prophecy" Section 3 Verse 5:

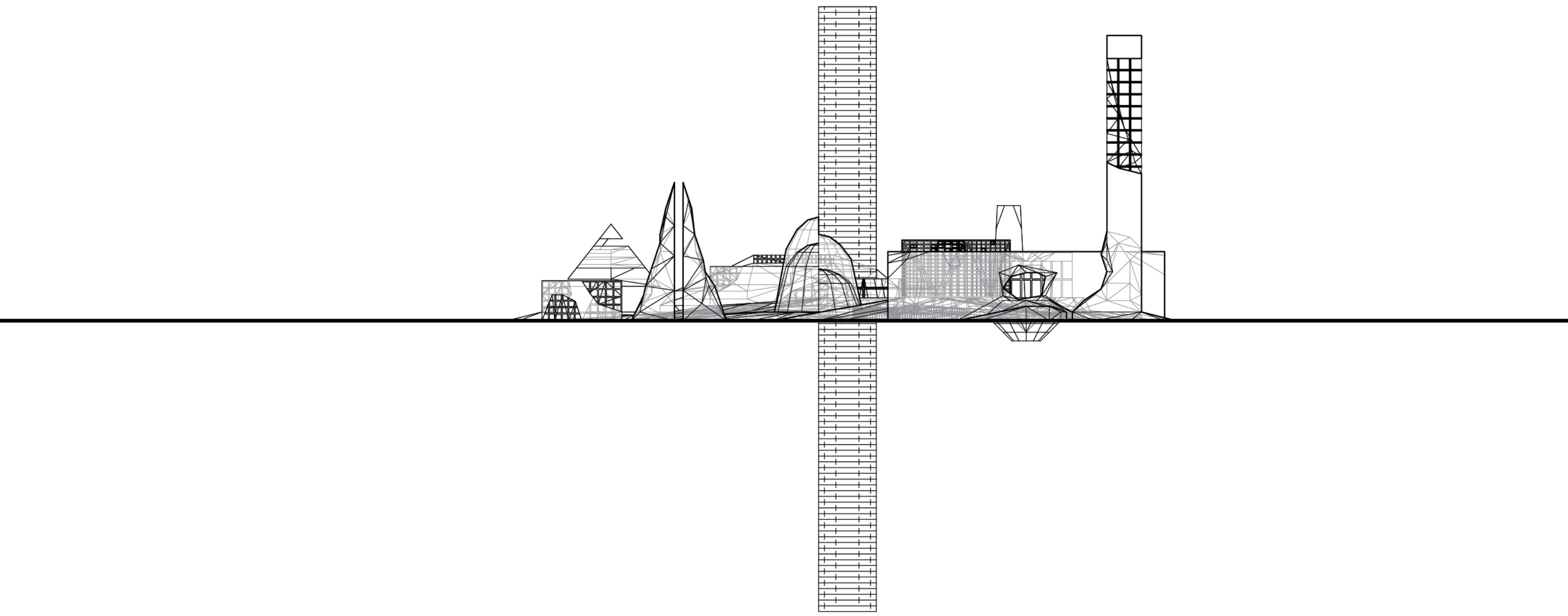
The eroded and frozen landscape of my ***Skin*** */ Climbs to pass through the tube of my capillary, / While my* ***Bloodstream*** *runs through it obliquely / To filter out unwanted refuse / And purify the stream. / My bloodstream was at one time understood / To be a river sanctuary of ritual cleansing / For the willing and righteous pasthumans.*

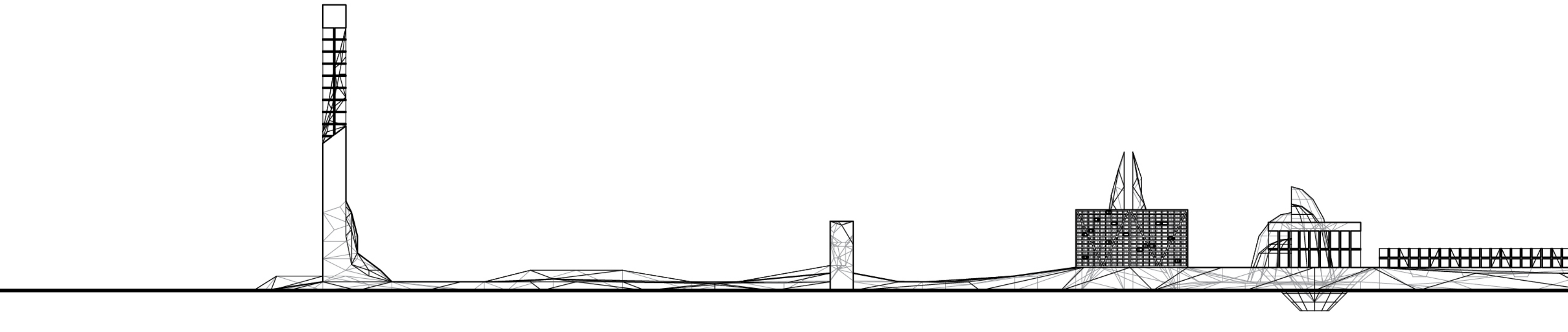
My bloodstream was initially constructed during Episode III [Accept Extinction]*, in conjunction with the initiation of the sacrificial rituals of the Followers of the Bowels at the Temple of Crematoria. My bloodstream served its intended purpose perfunctorily. My skin is not per se a product of any of the episodes, but rather, the episodes' leftover, eroded, and frozen resultant. Within my skin, fragments of the Old City are encapsulated as archaeological artifacts of past manifestations of my Self.*

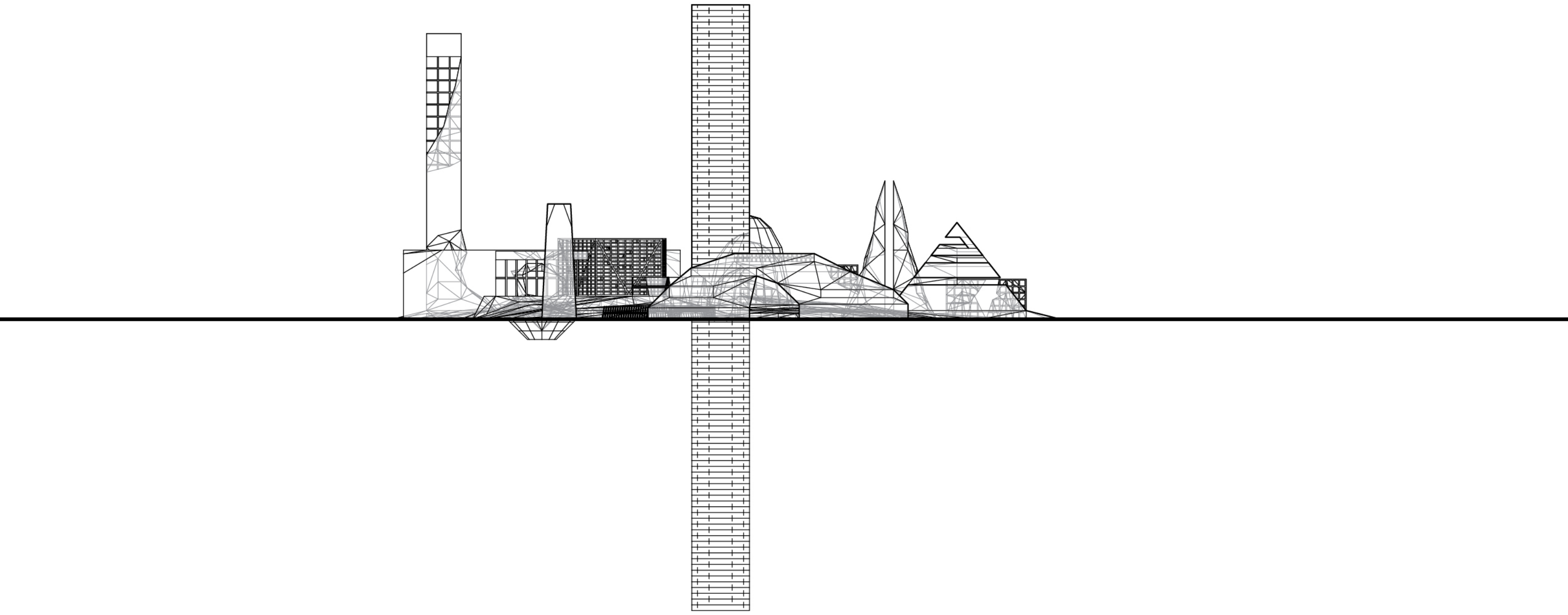
*All figure templates are at 1:4 scale of their original size, unless otherwise stated. The template below is not to scale.

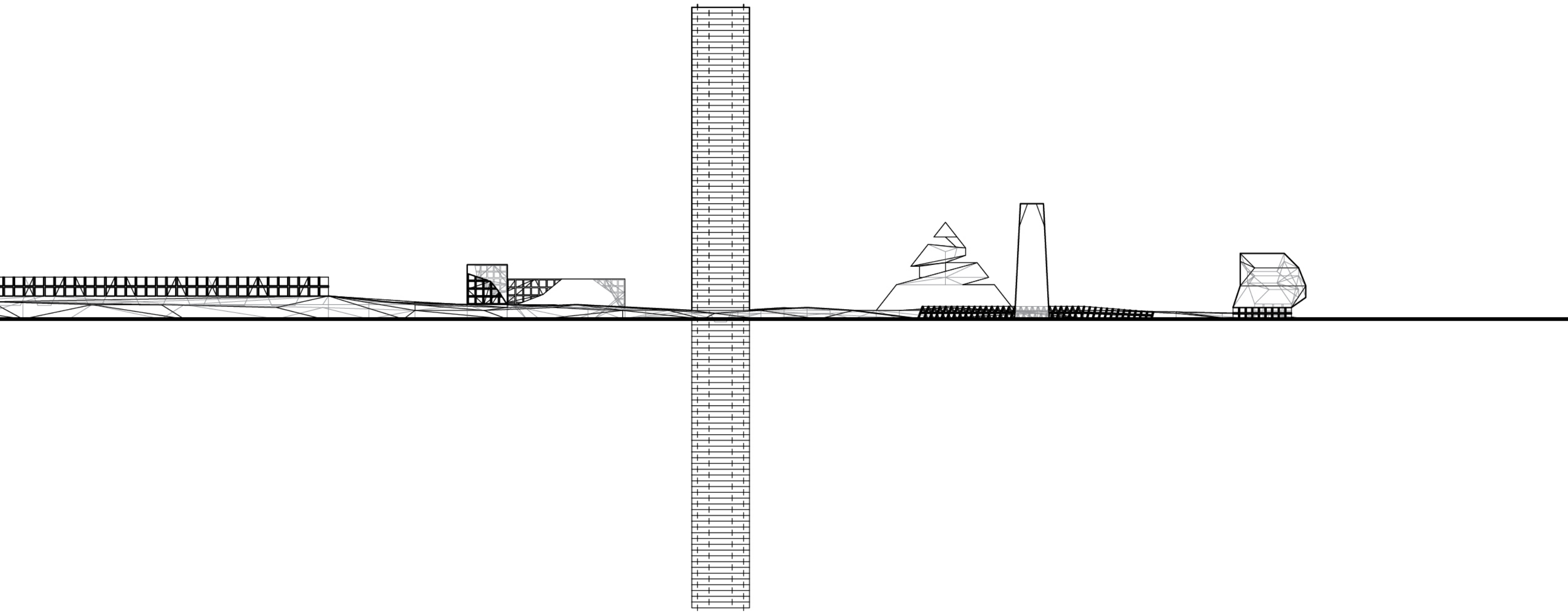
Following spread: Isotopia North, South, West Elevations, 1:8 scale.











delirious new york
rem koolhaas
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GN 362 L47 1979
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BF 173 J85 S413 1968
STEINER
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BP 595 S894 P4613 1995
Borges
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PQ 7797 B635 A22 1999
VIKING
Calvino ✱ T ZERO
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VISIONS OF APOCALYPSE
palgrave
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BF 311 B754 2005
O'MEARA
Pythagoras Revived
B 243 O 46 1989
RUSSELL
CONQUEST OF HAPPINESS
BJ 1481 R75 1930
IMAGE, MUSIC, TEXT
PN 37 B29
CARTESIAN LINGUISTICS
P 123 C53
THINKERS FOR ARCHITECTS 07
Derrida for Architects
Richard Coyne
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aristotle ON SLEEP AND DREAMS
PA 3896 P2 1990
HUSSERL ◆ PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE CRISIS OF PHILOSOPHY
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MEGA-STRUCTURE RELOADED
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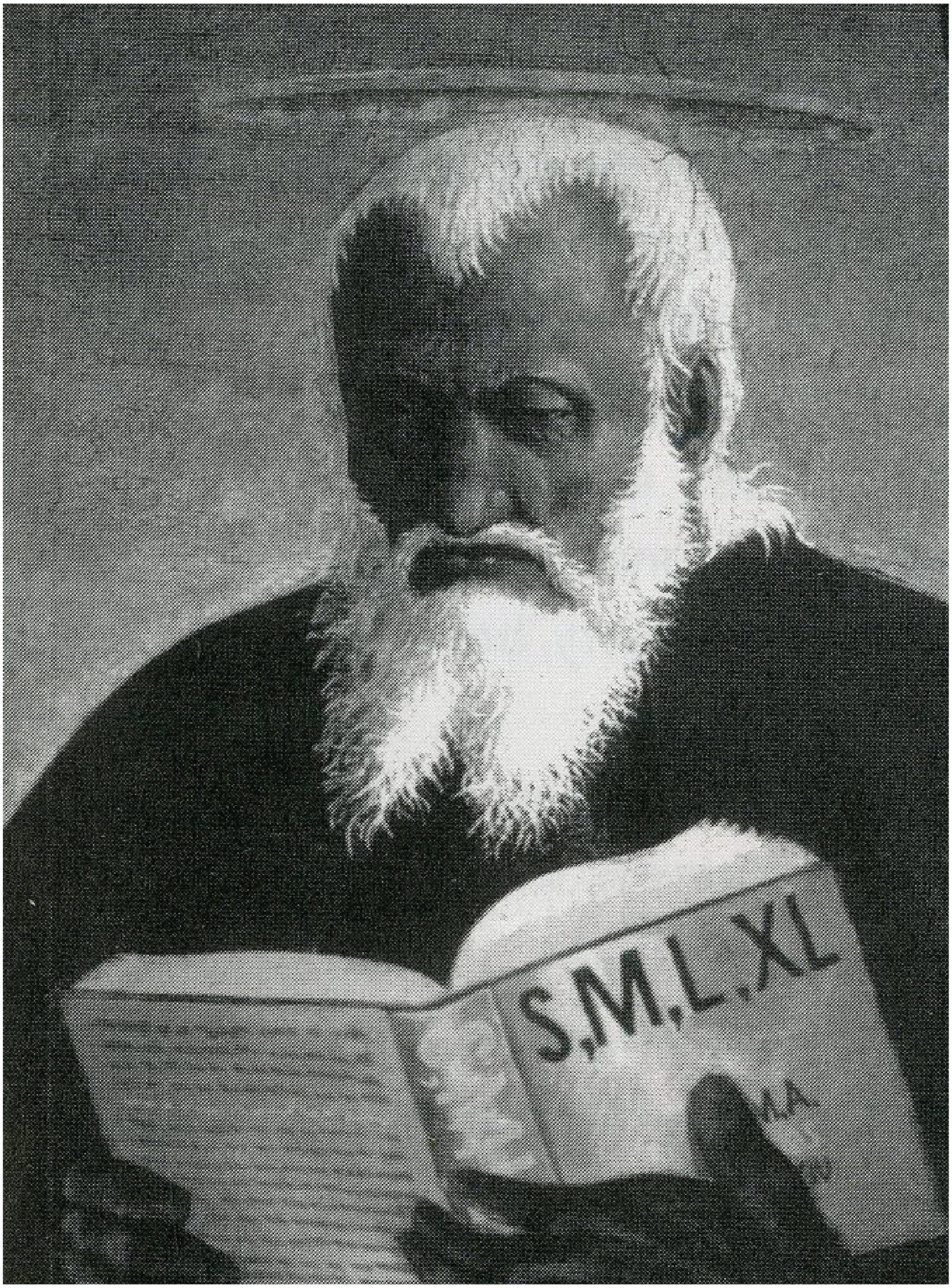


“The figure of the old testament prophet reading the truth is Madelon Vriesendorp’s Christmas card to her husband in 1995.”

Charles Jencks in Kester Rattenbury [ed.], *This Is Not Architecture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002): frontispiece.

INTRODUCTION

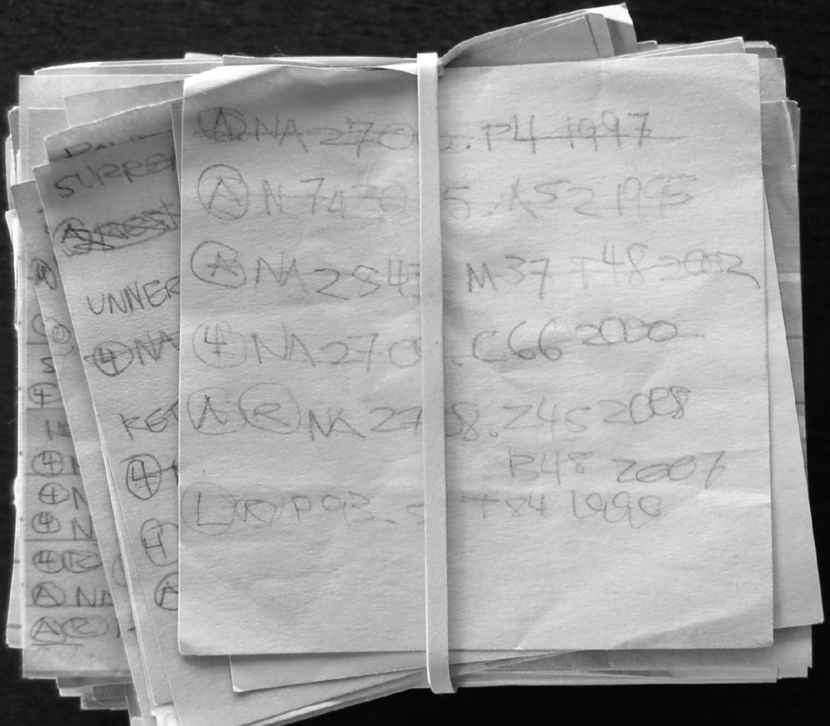
This thesis understands ***architecture*** *as the* ***purposeful and calculated concretization of Human ideas and beliefs****: functional, technical, conceptual, programmatic, social, cultural, political, religious, spiritual, existential, metaphysical, etc.*

As an architecture student in the context of an academic environment and without great economic influence, this thesis fosters the visionary and projective potential inherent to the architectural discipline in terms of both discourse and practice, to embark on a project that follows a specific lineage of past “unbuilt” architectural projections whereby the project’s form of architectural representation both **stands for** and **exists as** the project. [In this formula, the **syntax** of the architectural representation holds the sole burden of embodying and portraying the **semantics** of the project’s intended scope of meaning and purpose. Therefore, this project attempts to find a symbiosis between the **semantic content** of the project’s vision and the **syntactic technique** of representation employed, to create a series of artifacts that concretize the ideas and beliefs of the architectural projection.]

Finding a place of comfort within the greater picture of architectural discourse and lineage is potentially a major component of the thesis process. A student has the opportunity to build with and upon the discursive foundations confronted in the earlier years, in an attempt to further define one’s own voice. In the case of this thesis project, significant efforts have been put into the search for a filial home relative to the lineage. This section attempts to supply a window into that process through a series of mini-essays attempting to situate the project with respect to specific veins of architectural discourse and representation, focusing principally of the inherent validity of architectural design artifacts in and of themselves, as opposed to the physical reality that they represent or portend to portray.

A military engineer during the Seventeenth Century rule of the French King Louis XIV, Sébastien Le Prestre, Marquis de Vauban oversaw a mission to survey and model the urban landscapes of the major towns sought for control under the King’s plan for a reunified France. In the production of these plan-relief models, the royal French imperialists wisely provided themselves with ontological ‘god’s-eye’ views of the physical nature of their valued assets — ones both in possession and to be acquired. Thus the representational artifacts attained an elevated value in their own right, not only as artifacts of royal wealth and fecundity, but also as practical devices of strategic planning. Social gatherings amongst royals, intellectuals, and militarists of the ruling class afforded for creative speculation as to the circumstantial specificities and particularities required of an invasive offensive or defensive fortification. The activity was predicated on the understanding that future-oriented, procedurally based, conceptual speculation could be bolstered through means of concrete visualization and reflective deliberation. The court of Louis XIV carried out a highly ritualized and cerebral mode of strategic contemplation in planning and preparing for the possible iterations of future manifestations inherent to a specific place, a ritual not unlike that of the studio project review at any given firm or school of architecture.

Learning from the rituals of the French courtiers, the project of Isotopia resides in the realm of the conceptual, with the physical artifacts of the project acting merely as a vehicle for the facility of their concretization and transmission.



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4 NA 2700 C66 2000
A R NA 2708 . Z45 2008
B48 2007
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Images opposite: Photographs by the author, a stack of Dewey Decimal System notes, representing many trips to the library.

Art and Architecture

Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

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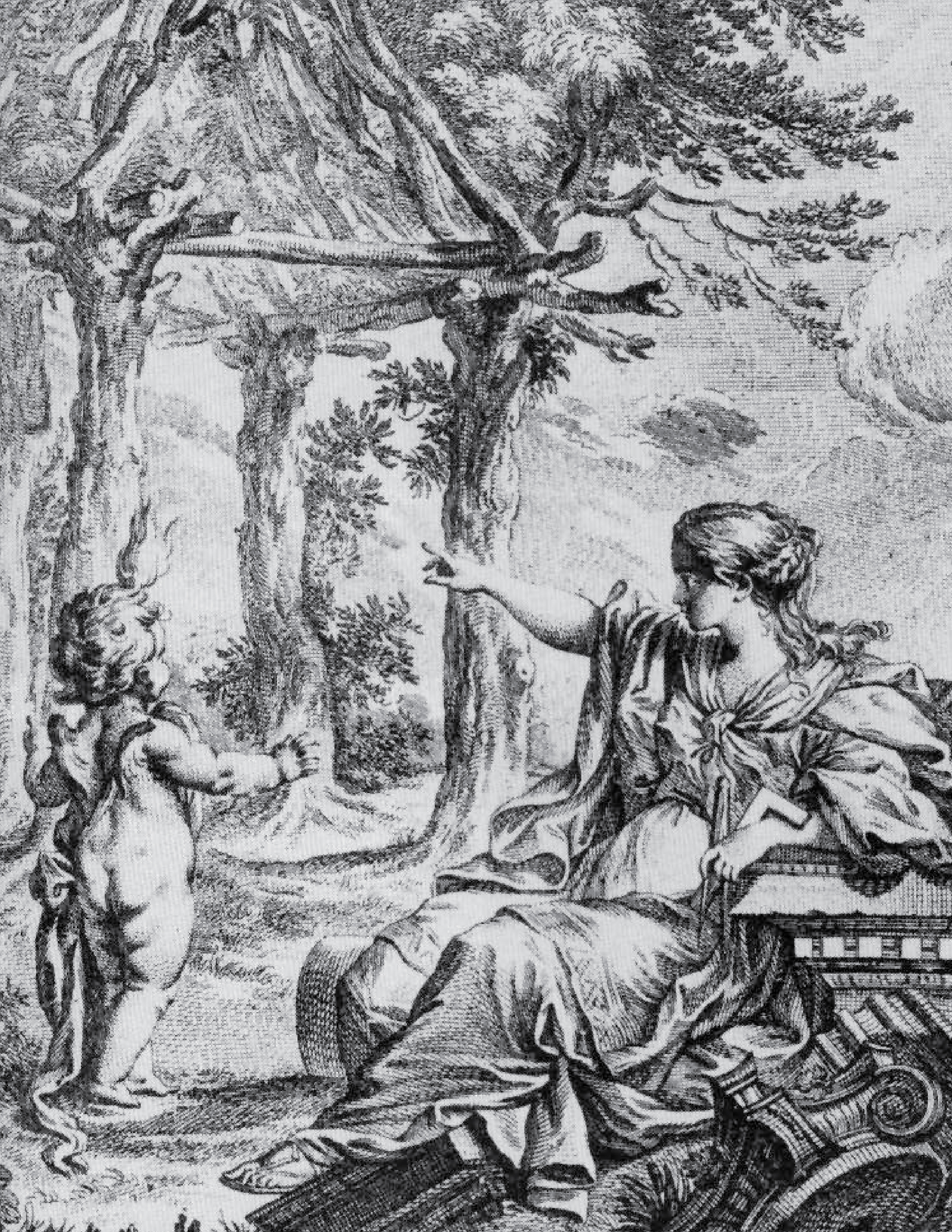

SITUATING THE PROJECT WITHIN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

In any given commission, the architect is tasked with envisioning and proposing an actively alternative reality for the future, a future that would not exist or come into existence without the architect's vision. An architectural representation provides means for envisioning, exhibiting, and in some cases altering specific conditions and scenarios within the future. Physical models enable microcosmic simulations of spatial and architectonic possibilities of the future. Perspectival renderings facilitate pictorial simulations for potential architectural conceptions of the future. Orthographic projections permit ontological simulations for the physical manifestation of architecture in the future.

This thesis posits that through its speculative, visionary, translational, and transmissional nature, the medium of architectural representation bears the fundamental potential and has the latent opportunity to explore and chart realms of alternative awareness which are arguably beyond the capacities of ration and reason and rather on the side of imagination and invention. The physical model is not beholden to the same obligations of structure as its potential resultant manifestation. The perspectival rendering has little or no responsibility to the concrete laws of space and time. The orthographic projection is not obliged to the contemporary capabilities of construction. *Isotopia* does not only utilize these characteristics; its very foundation is built upon them.

The architectural representation of Laugier's "primitive hut" depicts a foundational mythology of Architecture.

Isotopia represents its own mythology.

Image opposite: Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essay on Architecture* frontispiece engraving (1753).

Marc-Antoine Laugier [trans. by Wolfgang Herrmann], *An Essay on Architecture*
(Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977, originally in French, 1753): frontispiece.

THE POWER OF HOMO FABER

The project is founded within the enterprise of Human-made artifacts — particularly architectural and pictorial representations — as salient and powerful polemic devices for envisioning unorthodox or alternative manifestations of reality.

> Classical bronze statues could serve as public monuments, as cult statues, or as embellishments to private dwellings. But throughout the testimonial, we get the sense that **they were often treated not exactly as inanimate objects but rather as sensate individuals**. In the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia, there was a statue of Theagenes, from the island of Thasos, who was Olympic boxing champion in 480 BCE.
>
> When he died, someone who hated him in his lifetime came every night to Theagenes' statue to flog the bronze as if he were beating up Theagenes himself: the statue fell on him and put an end to his impertinence, but as he was killed his sons prosecuted the statue for murder, and the Thasians drowned Theagenes' statue in the sea. (Pausanias 6.11.5-6 via Mattusch 30)

Theagenes is said to have won more than 1,300 crowns in competition at the major Greek athletic games, and the Thasian father likely wasn't courageous enough nor suited to challenge the champion in life. To the aggravated sporting fan, the static and immobile statue of Theagenes' figure would have likely appeared a more easily confronted opponent. And, as many Humans do, the Thasian father underestimated the potential power of the object, and thus died under its weight. The almost comical prosecution and drowning of the statue might then be viewed as an all-too-literal confrontation with this very idea, personifying the statue as though it had been Theagenes himself — or a force of his essence — who had lunged forward and crushed the man.
At fault for the death was an inanimate piece of cast bronze, and yet the Thasian sons in blaming the media were incapable of separating the physical artifact from the character for whom it stood to represent, and thus their restitution was carried out formally, in a sensibility perhaps analogous to the regiments of firemen in Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. In the scenario of this dystopian world, books are held equally accountable for the actions that they lead people to.

THE POWER OF HOMO FABER (Cont'd)

Aware of the potential potency and power of the concepts and ideas which they contain and transmit, different cultures, movements, and groups of people throughout history have destroyed unique books and manuscripts, burned irreplaceable paintings, altered timeless statues, and toppled invaluable temples. Censorship is a product of a justified suspicion for and insecurity towards the seemingly infinite possibilities of **homo faber**.

> It was not reason but a man-made instrument, the telescope, which actually changed the physical world view; it was not contemplation, observation, speculation which led to the new knowledge, but the active stepping in of **homo faber**, of making and fabricating. (Arendt 274)

The system of power through **homo faber** generally functions on the grounds of three constituents: the maker of the object, the object itself, and an audience to view the object (maker, object, observer — i.e. someone to say something, something to say it, and someone to hear it). In the structure of this system, the products of Human intervention possess vast potential for influence and affect. By nature of their conscious construction, the maker of the object that plays the game of the system has the opportunity to attempt to control and calculate the intended meaning. In this formula there are different perspectives to consider: the object's intended meaning (that of its makers), the nature of the object's literal existence, and the way in which the object is understood by an observer. Framed as a device of translation and transmission, meaning is a component both external from and inherent to any Human-made product.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

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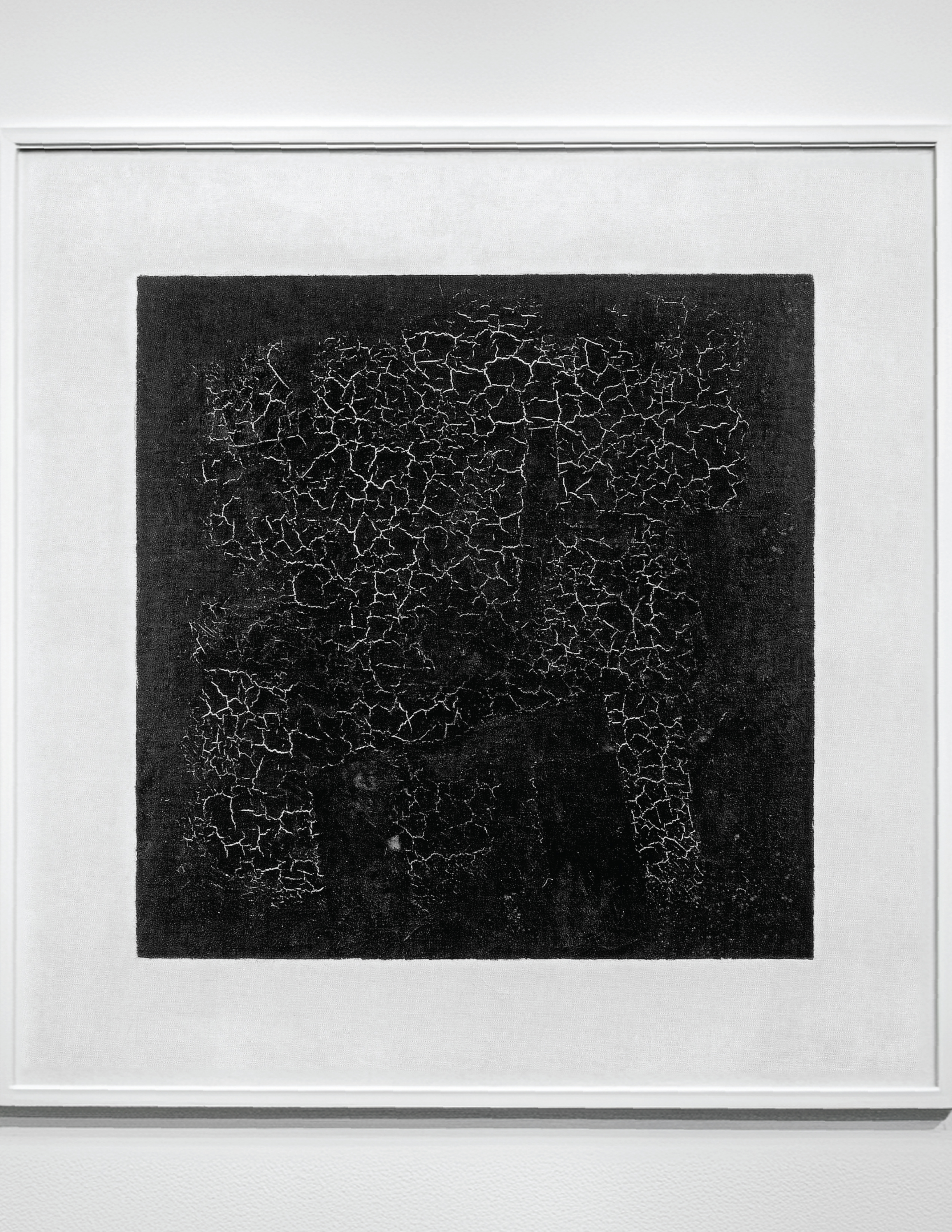


THE POTENTIAL OF ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

Through the lens of homo faber, Kasimir Malevich's Suprematist attempts to gain autonomy from the representation of what already exists. As a thesis project within the confines of an architectural education and without means or aspirations to achieve built form, Part I seeks to legitimize architectural representation as an enabling device for translating and transmitting visionary architectural concepts, scenarios, and ideas — though ones not necessarily as esoteric and non-descript as those of Malevich. Part I additionally attempts to discern methods, techniques, and approaches used towards these ends, looking to establish a sort of baseline or framework of viewpoints for looking at architectural representations of the imaginary.

> I sometimes set myself thinking and imagining that I find amongst men but one single art or science, and that is drawing or painting, all others being members proceeding therefrom; for if you carefully consider all that is being done in this life you will find that each person is, without knowing it, painting this world, creating and producing new forms and figures here…
>
> Michelangelo Buonarroti, in dialogue with Francisco de Hollanda (c.1538, from Holroyd 296)

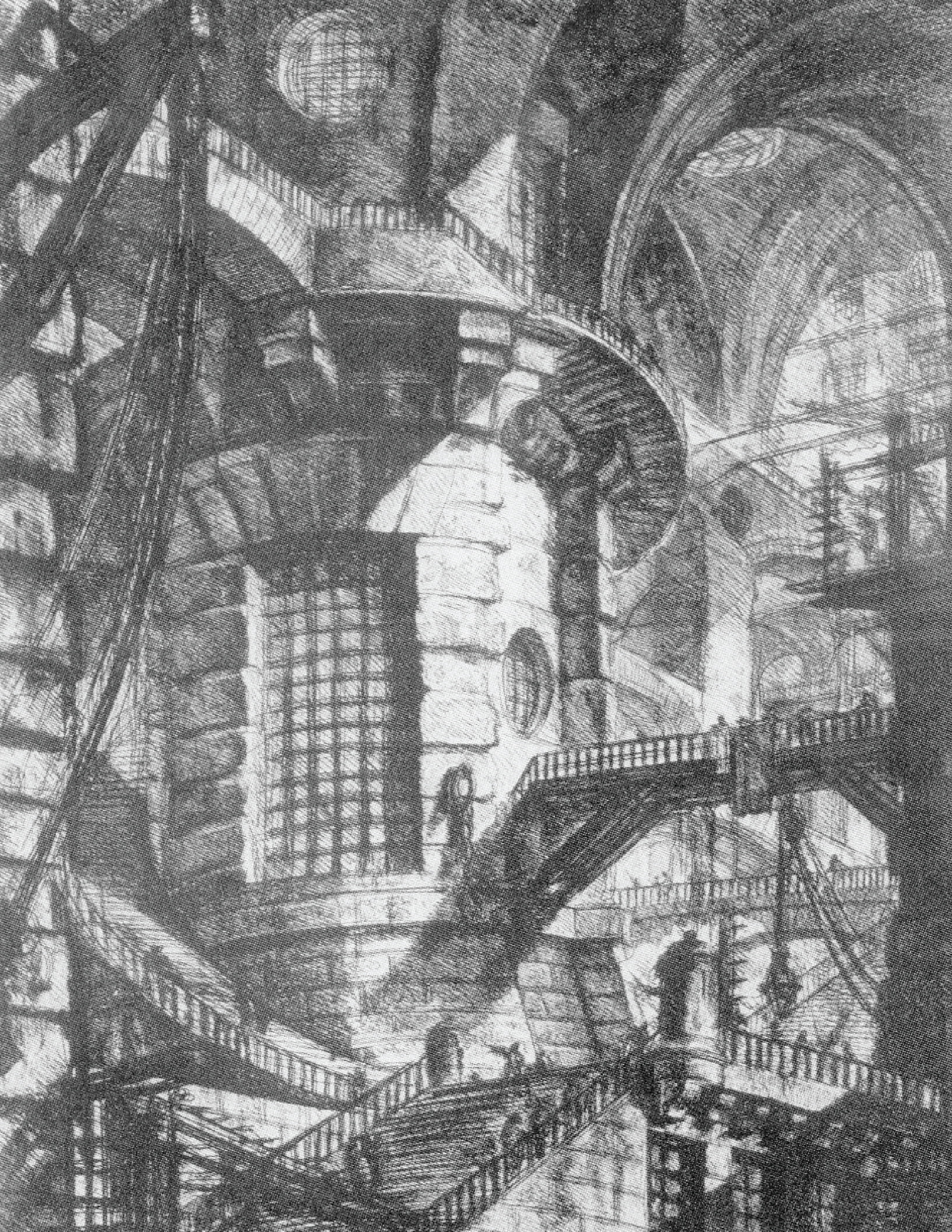
In his essay "Translations from Drawing to Building," Robin Evans juxtaposes the nature of traditional artistic representation (pre-Twentieth Century) with that of conventional architectural representation. Whereas the subject matter of an artistic representation (in some way or another) is held to exist in reality before the creation of the artistic artifact, an architectural representation brings its subject matter into existence through the manifestation of the architectural artifact. Artistic representation—through abstraction—has in the past strived to stand on its own in this way, autonomous of a previous reality or any external reference beyond the encoded artifact itself and the message which it conveys, subverting the idea of re-presentation in favor of presentation. Kasimir Malevich's 1915 painting entitled *Quadrilateral* — and often improperly attributed as *Black Square on a White Ground*, or simply *Black Square* — is an attempt to negate this referential, representational nature which preceding painting conventions had taken for granted, for the purpose of achieving a certain level of autonomy through abstraction in the artist's search for a form of higher spiritual, metaphysical, or ontological expression beyond the tangible reach of words.

In an analogous manner, an architectural representation must by definition be viewed as a mechanism of translation and transmission of the intangibles of the mind into being (or having physical presence), of reference to systems and structures external to the physical artifact of the drawing itself and beyond the capacity of words or other forms of language and expression. Using the conventions of drawing to scrupulously and meticulously construct specialized sets of parameters, logics, and systems of spatio-formal structure, the resulting drawing attains its own reality and lives to act as a representation (or simply an isolated presentation) of this autonomous world, with the medium functioning to enable the mediation of the gap between the 'imagined' world and the 'real' world. The architectural representation is conventionally understood to exist for the purpose of translating an idea into the physical world beyond the artifact of the representation itself. However as a project in the context of an architectural education (as opposed to practice), this thesis has no true obligation to strive beyond a focus on architectural representation as a means for translating and transmitting ideas into the 'real' world (from the mind of the author to the artifact created and from the artifact created to the mind of the viewer or reader).

Image opposite: Kasimir Malevich, *Quadrilateral* painting (1915) from Souter 109.

Charles Holroyd, Francisco de Hollanda [translation by Ascanio Condivi], *Michael Angelo Buonarroti* (London: Duckworth, 1903).

Gerry Souter, *Malevich: Journey to Infinity* (New York, NY: Parkstone Press, 2008).



CONSPICUOUS DEVIATION IN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

An exploration of the concept of conspicuous deviation — an approach that presents conventional architectural references and allusions in subverted and oftentimes unsettling pictorial presentations — is exemplified through an examination of Piranesi's Carceri prints and Libeskind's Micromegas drawings.

Architectural representation provides a means for stepping into realms of the imaginary, or so-called "unreal" (perhaps the making of the representation makes it real, in a way). Conspicuous deviation from the commonalities of convention, understanding, logic, and physical principles of reality consciously and visibly detaches the representation from said reality. Giovanni Battista Piranesi's 1760 series of copper engravings entitled *Invenzioni Capric di Carceri* (*Inventions Caprice of Prisons* and commonly referred to more simply as *Le Carceri*) epitomizes this approach, as Christian W. Thomsen explains:

> They derive their aesthetic effect from the device known as paradox: a simultaneity of opposites, such as hall and dungeon, light and darkness, inside and out, palace and ruin… (Thomsen 48)

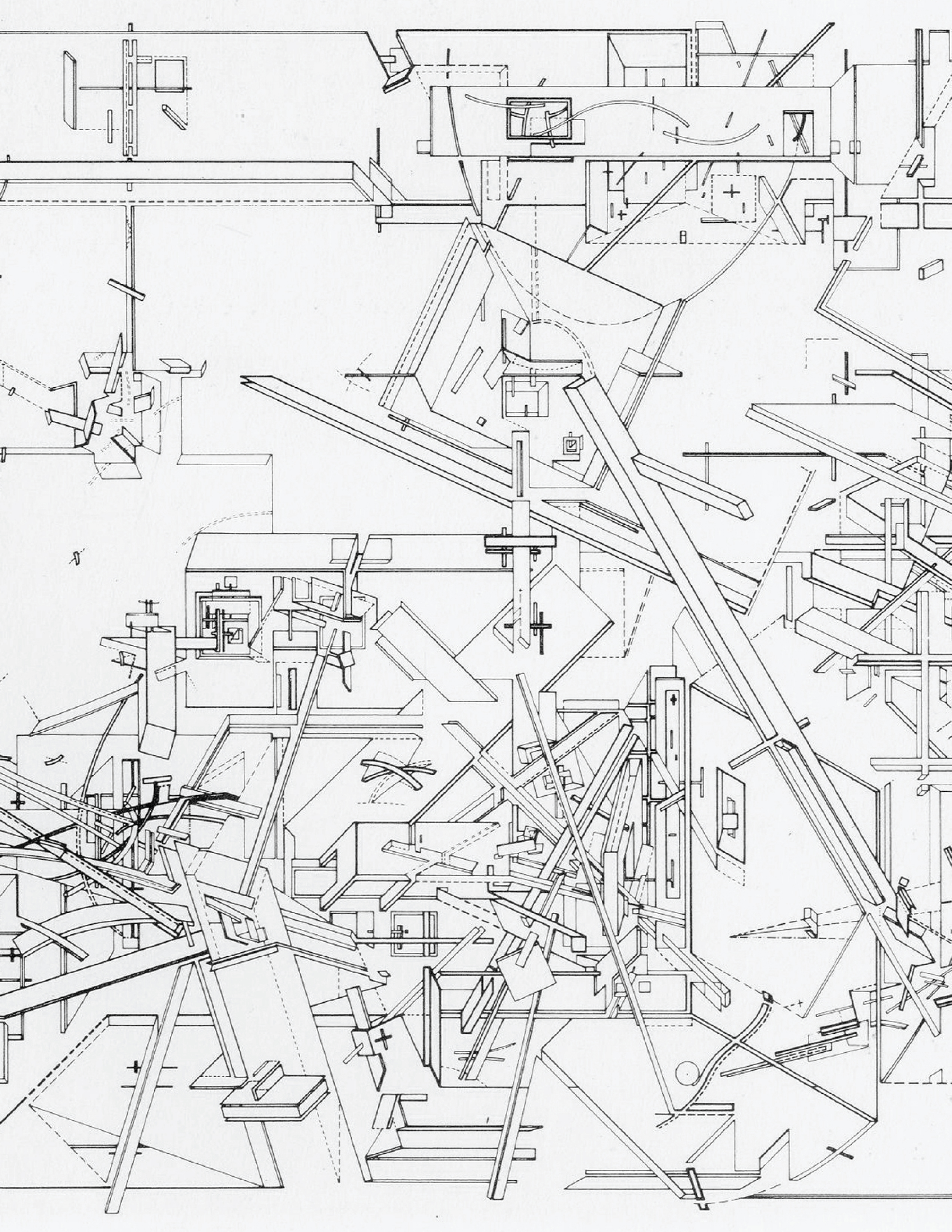
Upon observation and reflection, the *Carceri* etchings achieve an unsettling effect through their manipulation of these dichotomous paradoxes of reality, provoking questions as to the nature of this place depicted, what its 'story' is, what its parameters are. Piranesi has the utmost control over these conspicuous deviations, whether they manifest programmatically, spatially, or atmospherically. In plate 3 the intricately vaulted ceiling indicates an interior space but the far wall that meets it is rusticated and formalized as an exterior would be. The elaborate sequences of stairs and pathways bear little discernible logic beyond their compositional intention within the representation to confuse and cause questions — where do they lead? Why do some terminate at blank walls? There are no answers to be had, beyond the conclusion that the representation presents a space not of this world, or 'not real.'

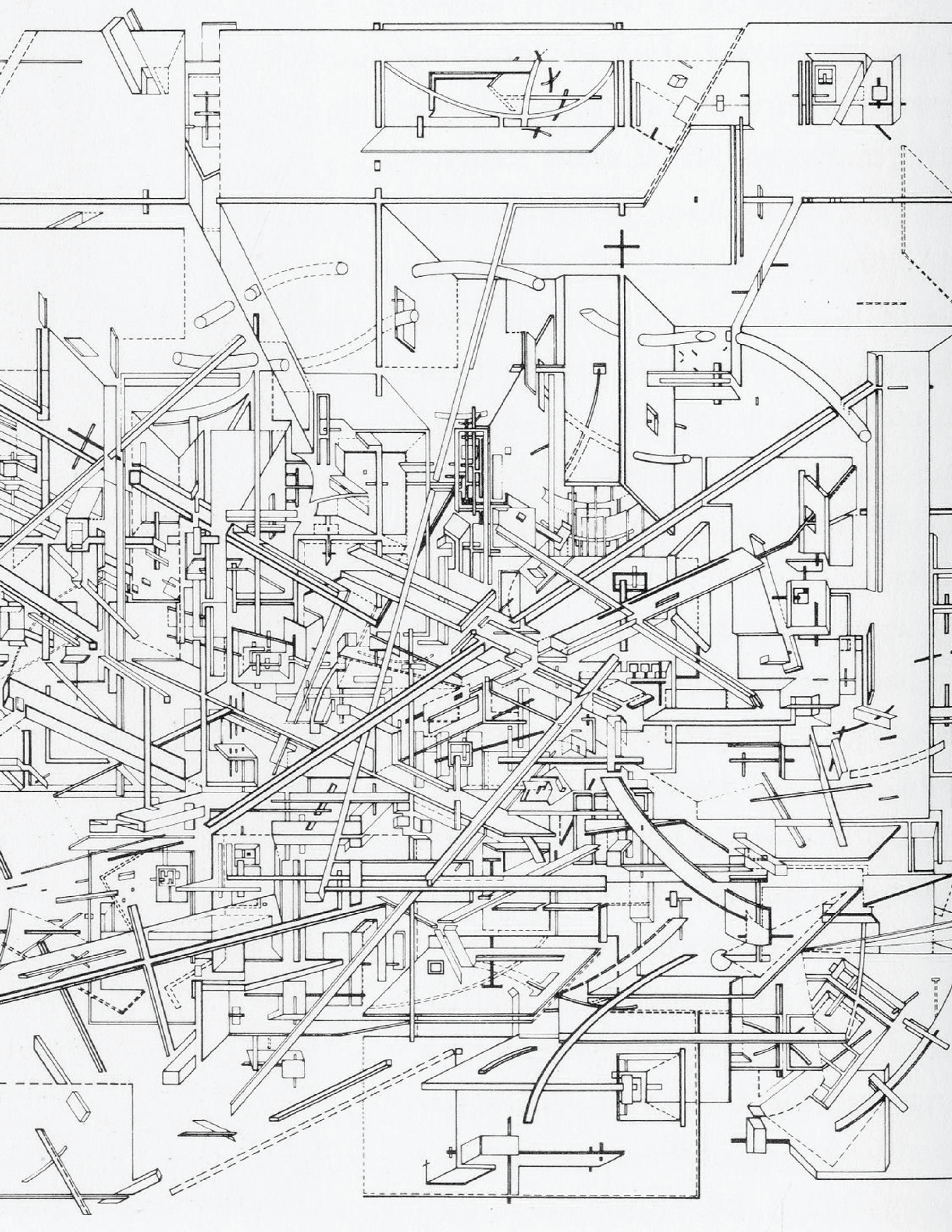
To this extreme, Daniel Libeskind's two-dimensional architectural representations create a highly spatiallized, clearly alternative and fantastical reality. Through the calculated use of references, techniques, and principles latent to the conventions of contemporary architectural representation, Libeskind's 1979 *Micromegas* series enacts an architectural fiction of formal components in space. Libeskind justifies this project as historically in line with the enterprise of the architect: "Vitruvius and Alberti said, every architect must first make a machine to do architecture." (Thomsen 151) The disciplinarily visionary nature of architectural drawing and representation lends it a certain level of autonomy from the common viewer's skills of legibility. When understood as an architectural representation of differing or alternative spatio-formal conditions of existence, the abstract 'artistic' representation becomes a more fruitful and constructive endeavor for the architect in training: in order to work (and build) with restraint and awareness as to the capacities and properties of reality, one must understand and come to terms with instances of its inversion or alteration.

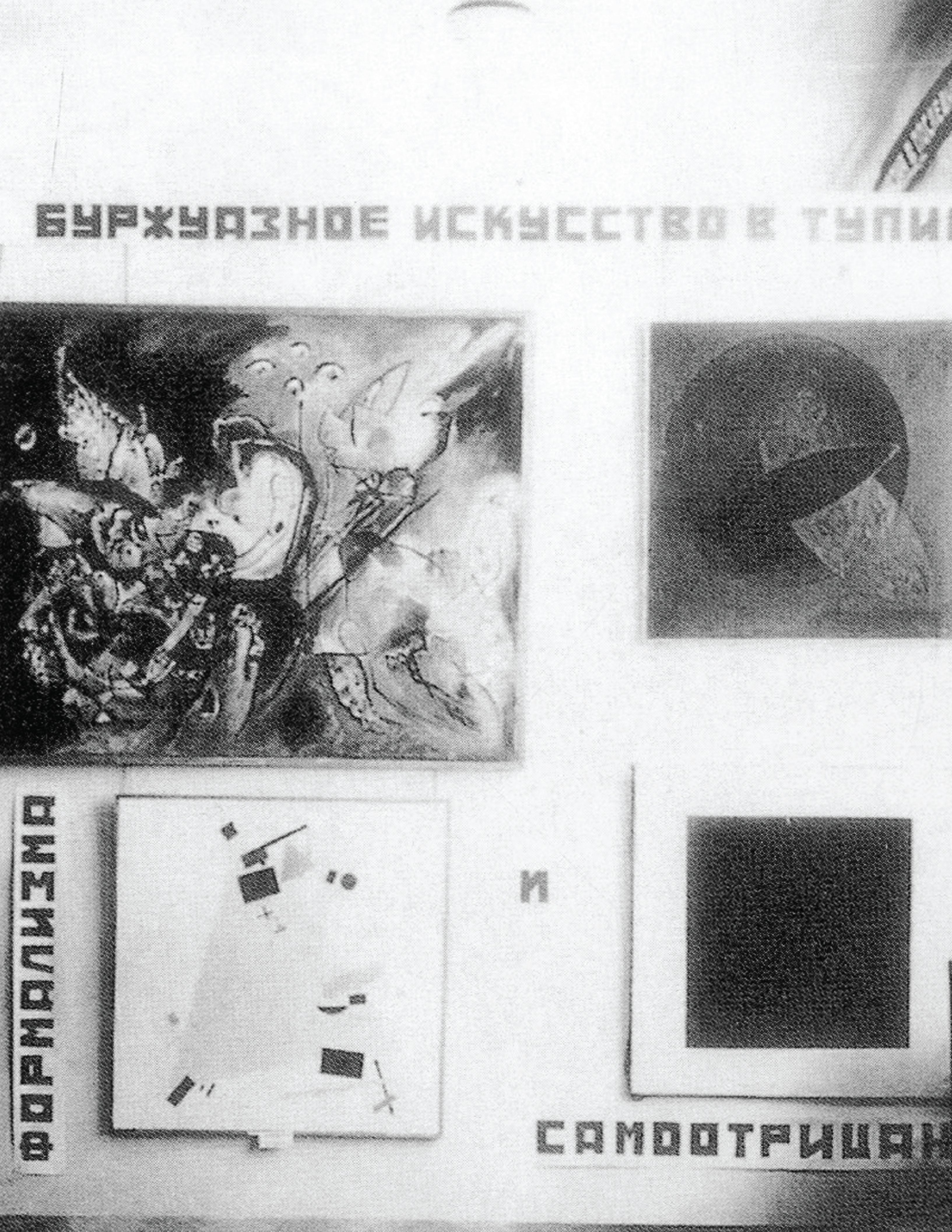
Image opposite: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Invenzioni Capric di Carceri* plate 3 engraving (1760) from Thomsen 48.

Following spread: Daniel Libeskind, *Micromegas, Leakage* drawing (1979) from Thomsen 150.

Christian W. Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture: From Babylon to Virtual Reality* (New York, NY: Prestel, 1994).







БУРЖУАЗНОЕ ИСКУССТВО В ТУПИ
ФОРМАЛИЗМА
И
САМООТРИЦАН

ABSTRACTION IN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

The role of abstraction in architectural representation is examined as a potentially liberating device and conversely as possibly delimiting and un-relatable means. This is contrasted by the stimulating work and methodology of Michael Webb in relation with the work of the Russian avant-garde and their negative reception in the 1930s for a perceivably esoteric and exclusive nature.

> The sun has never seen a shadow.
>
> Michael Webb

Abstraction frees architectural representation from the limits and constraints of the reality that we are corporeally beholden to perceive. Architectural representation could not exist without abstract thinking, that is, reasoning beyond the concrete or tangible. Michael Webb's statement conceptualizes the sun of our solar system as an ocular device, an all-seeing sentient eye looking outward in every direction in which its rays of light shoot and thus never able to see the shadows left on the backsides of the objects surrounding it. His representational methodologies hold the aspiration that through drawing these extraordinary and unusual ideas can be explored and represented for others to understand.

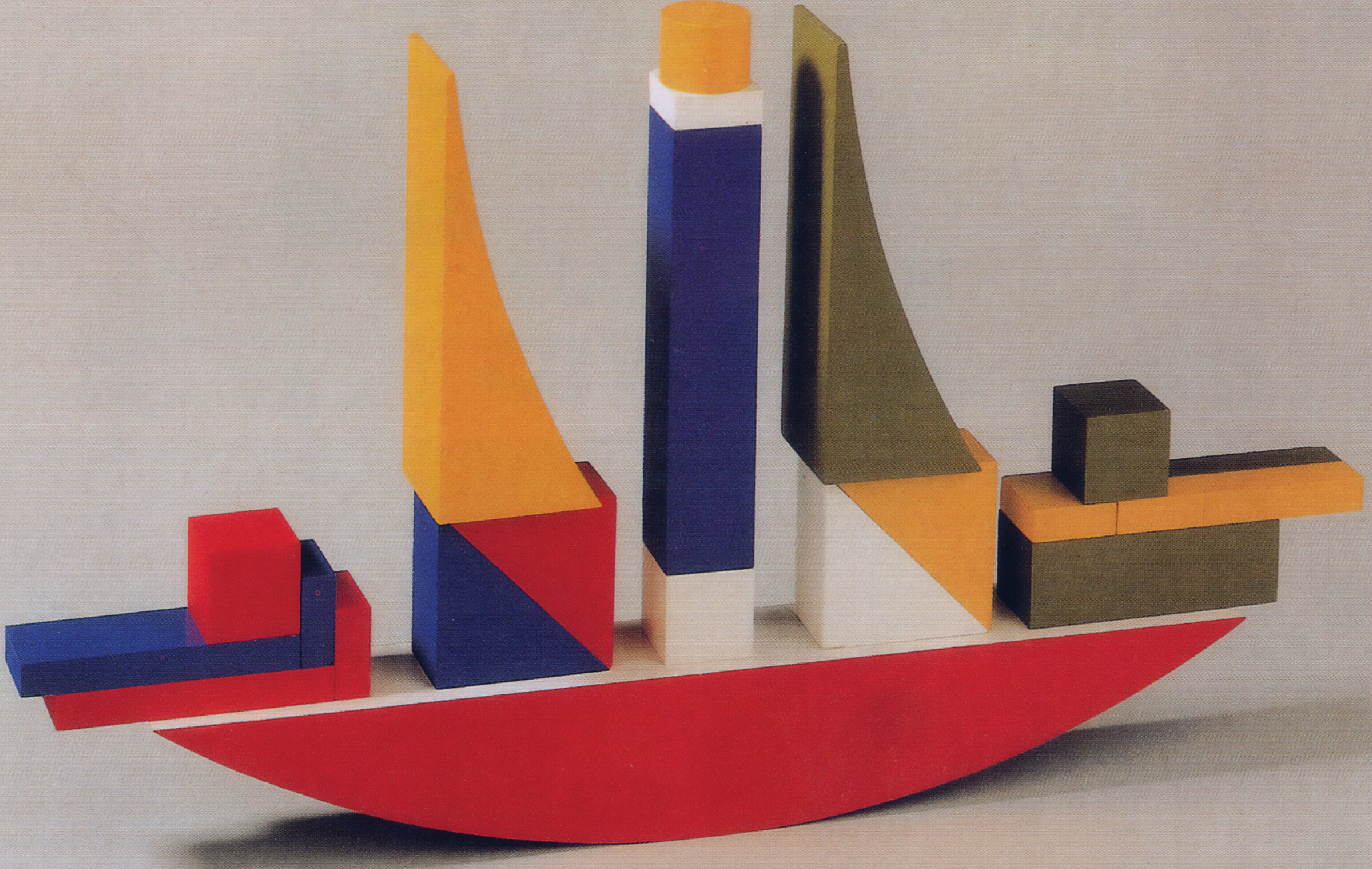
At the end of the spectrum however, when taken as an artifact to be read or viewed, abstraction limits the extent to which the reader (or viewer) is able to connect with the representation. It is the ultimate means of conspicuous deviation, straddling the line between meaning**ful** and meaning**less**, understandable and unreasonable. A defamatory exhibition at the Tretyakov Gallery Moscow of Malevich's Suprematism and the larger scene of Russian avant-garde exposes the contemporary response to the movements' heavy-handed use of formal abstraction. The wall text reads "Bourgeois art in the blind alley of formalism and self-negation." Their theoretical tendencies toward representational autonomy were for the purpose of enacting visual manifestos of higher thought, however the resulting abstraction brought the work to an almost childlike formal minimalism.

This perceived inequity between the works' **syntactic structure** (object-code-artifact) and **semantic content** (subject-message-idea), especially within the context of Stalin's Communist Russia, gave the movements a reputation for being high-brow, exclusionary, and esoteric. In the disciplinary context of contemporary architectural education however, their experiments in spatio-formal possibilities are fruitful when viewed in the light of Michael Webb's progressive and openly explorative abstract methodologies and isolated from their arguably obscure philosophical intentions.

Image opposite: Photograph, defamatory exhibition of Russian avant-garde art (1937) from Becks-Malorny 125.

Ulrike Becks-Malorny, *Wassily Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction* (South Korea: Taschen, 2007).

Michael Webb, "Two Journeys" from the *Syracuse Architecture Spring 2010 Lecture Series*, February 23, 2010 at Slocum Hall.



SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS IN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

A discussion of the dualistic relationship between syntactic structure and semantic content attempts to strengthen the clarity through which success or failure can be judged in the aforementioned strategies of conspicuous deviation and abstraction. Through this lens the object or artifact's realized state can be critiqued relative to their likeness or disparity with the original intentions of the author. The Bauhaus student Alma Buscher's Building-Block Game in the assembled form of the modern steamboat provides a conceptual case study for looking at different author's abstract syntactic interpretations of the subjects of the Human face and body.

Relative to the larger translational intentions of architectural representation, the kit of parts (the code or semantic structure), and the subject matter transmitted (the message or semantic content) should exist to reinforce one another. The Bauhaus student Alma Buscher's 1924 project for a *Building-Block Game*, in its documented configuration, serves as a strong example of this concept played out in three-dimensional terms. Buscher is known for her highly successful designs for modern children's toys, some of which were sold through the company Pestalozzi Frobel Verlag. They were intended to aid in shaping the minds of children toward thinking in abstract spatio-formal terms through the light of a design-oriented constructivism. "She wanted to create toys which were 'unconfusingly clear and specific' and 'as harmonious as possible' in their proportions." (Droste 94) It is not coincidence that this game, encouraging active engagement with three-dimensional shapes and forms, would be meant to be assembled in the abstract formation of a steamboat: one of the modernist design icons and inspiration for architects from the time of Le Corbusier up to Renzo Piano contemporarily. The abstract formal nature of the blocks, the constructive manner in which they are used, and the character of their intended assembly (the symbol of the steamship) are all aligned with the greater intention of the project in an almost propagandistic fashion.

Abstract expressions of Human anatomy and character are simultaneously **representations** of the pre-existing condition of the Human Body, as well as **presentations** of logics beyond what is overtly visible in the condition. Paintings of Human busts by the Bauhaus Masters Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky are examples of this interplay between syntactic structure and semantic content in the game of representation and presentation. The subject matter (head, face, eyes, nose, mouth, chin, neck, shoulders, etc.) is reinterpreted through the lens of an abstract formal syntax ordained by the author in accordance with the intangible semantics of Human character, taste, style, and theoretical standing. The resulting object stands as a representation of both the original subject matter, the artist's understanding and interpretation of the subject matter, yet through this interpretational regurgitation a completely new and unique constituent of reality arises: the artifact itself. The clear compositional and characteristic differences in the paintings by contemporary professors are a small indication of the breadth and depth of options, opportunities, and alternative modes of expression and communication in the realm of abstraction.

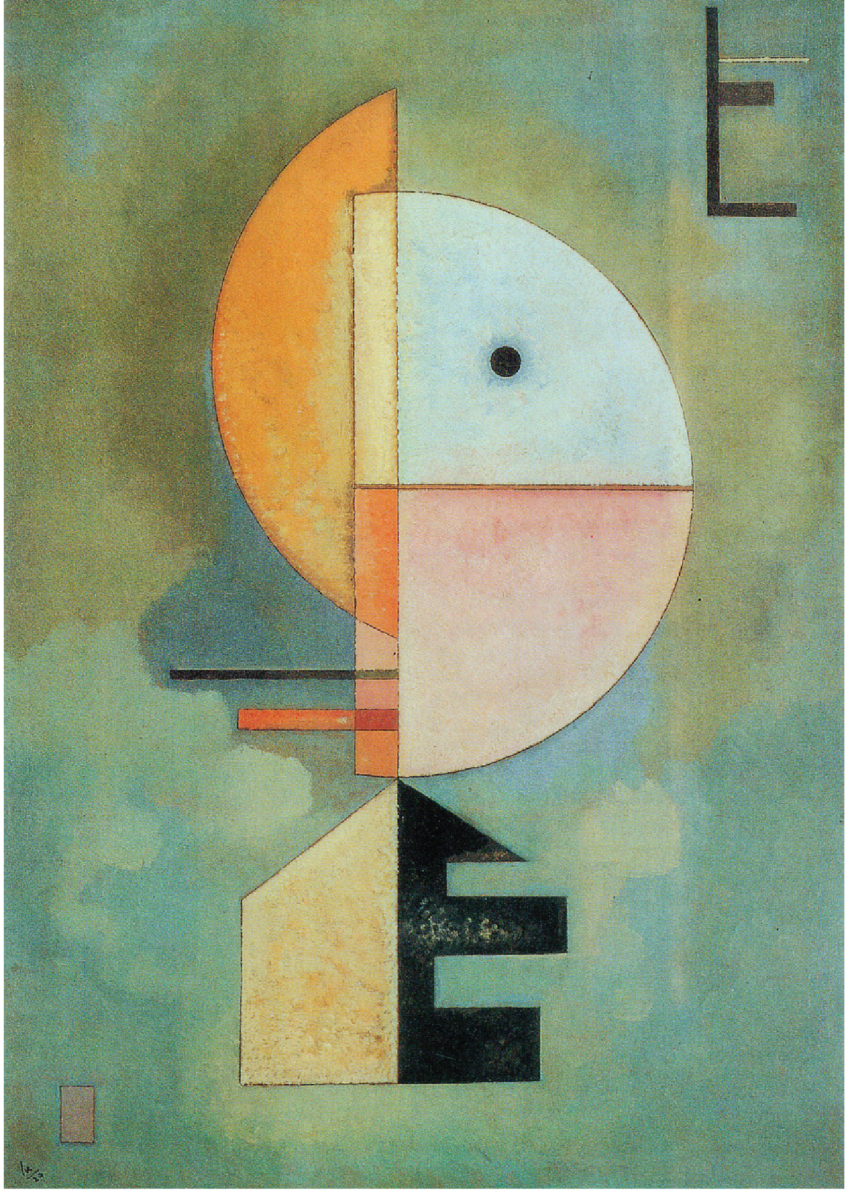
Image opposite: Alma Buscher, *Building-Block Game* model (1924) from Droste 93.

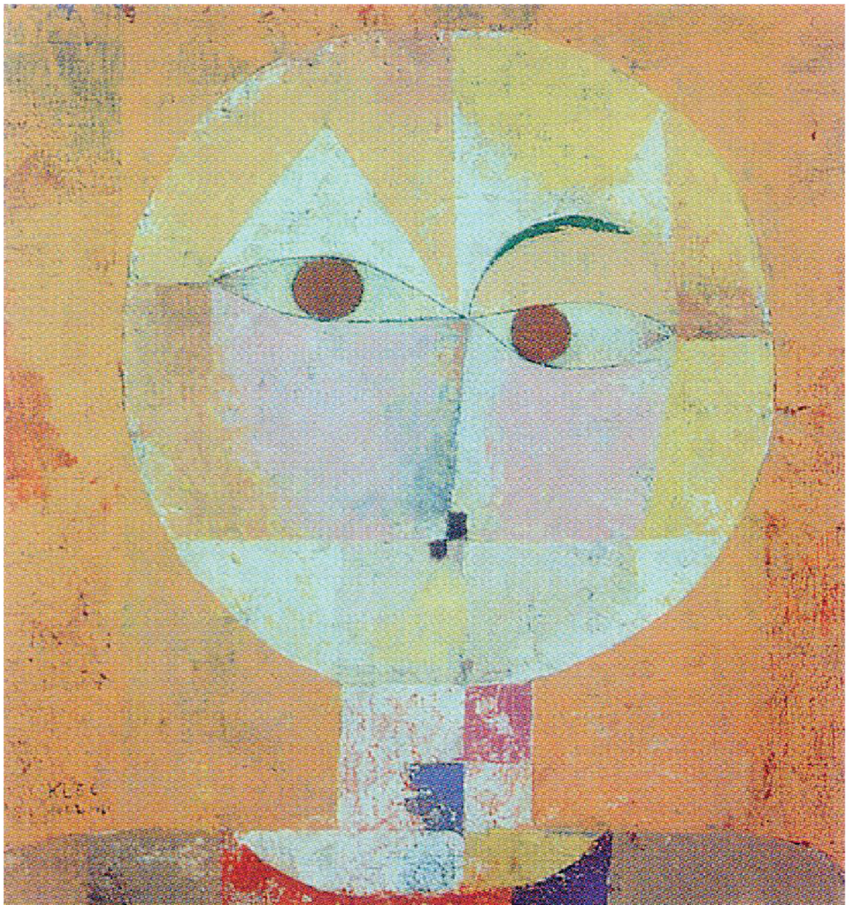
Following spread: [above left] Wassily Kandinsky, *Upward* painting (1929) from Becks-Malorny 158; [below left] Paul Klee, *Senecio* painting (1922) from Becks-Malorny 159; [right] Salvador Dali, *Le Maniqui* painting (*The Mannequin*, 1927) from Descharnes 68.

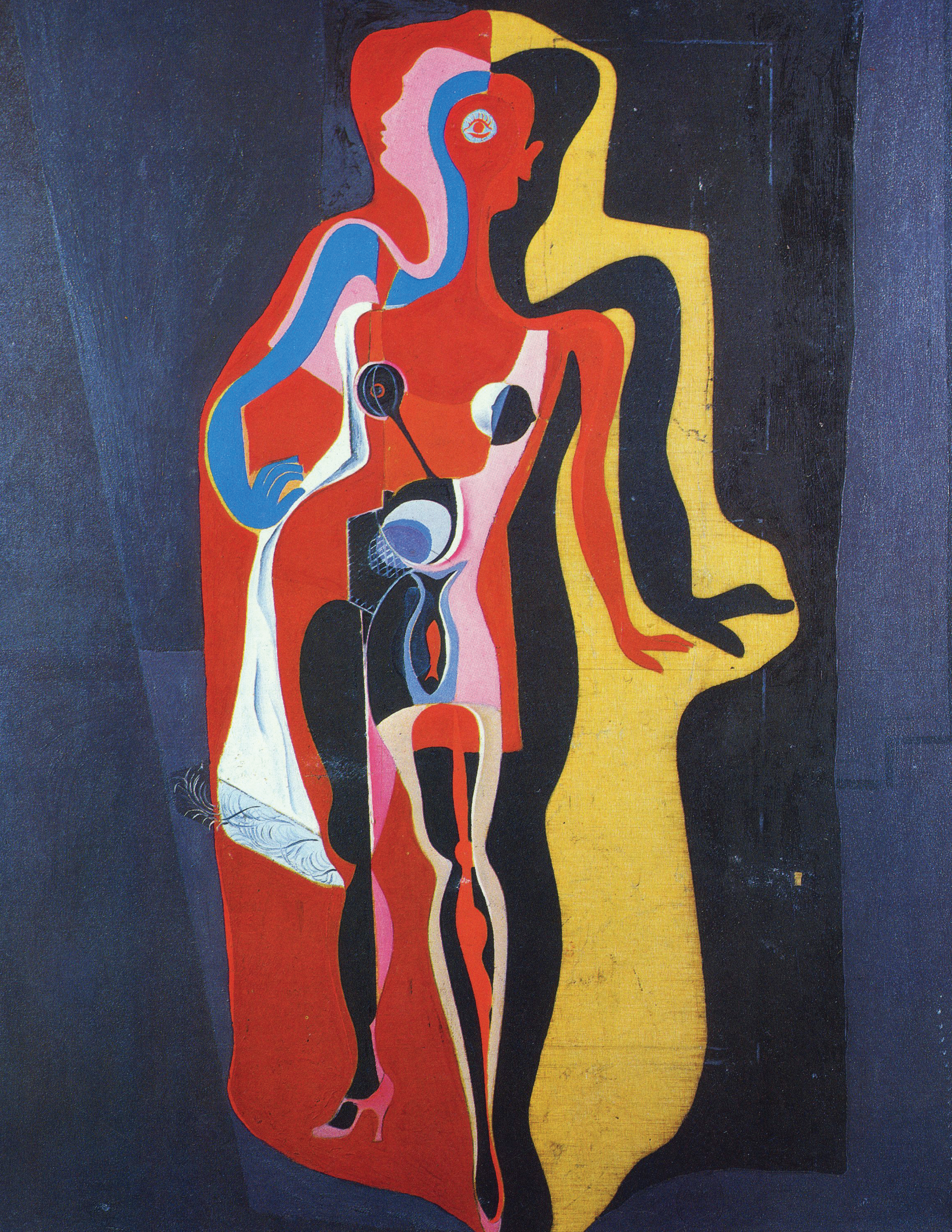
Ulrike Becks-Malorny, *Wassily Kandinsky: The Journey to Abstraction* (South Korea: Taschen, 2007).

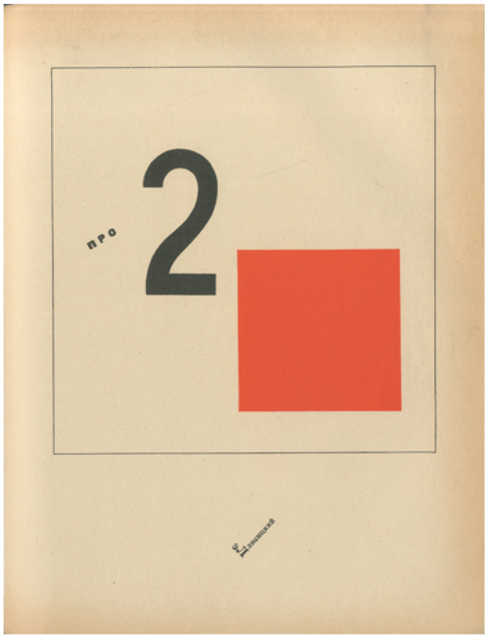
Robert Descharnes, *Salvador Dali: The Work The Man* (Milan: Abradale Press, 1984).

Magdalena Droste, *Bauhaus: 1919-1933* (China: Taschen, 2006).









1: Cover: ‘Of Two Squares / El Lissitzky’

Description:

‘In this tale of two squares I have set out to formulate an elementary idea, using elementary means, so that children may find it a stimulus to active play and grown-ups to enjoy it as something to look at. The action unrolls like a film. The words move within the fields of force of the figures as they act: these are square. Universal and specifically plastic forces are bodied forth typographically.’

Full Text:

1: Cover: ‘Of Two Squares / El Lissitzky’
(published Berlin, 1922)

2: Dedication: ‘To all, all children’

3: Title page: ‘El Lissitzky / Suprematist Tale / Of Two Squares / in six games / 1922 Sky then Berlin’

4: ‘Here are two squares’

5: ‘They fly on to the Earth from far away and’

6: ‘And see a black storm’

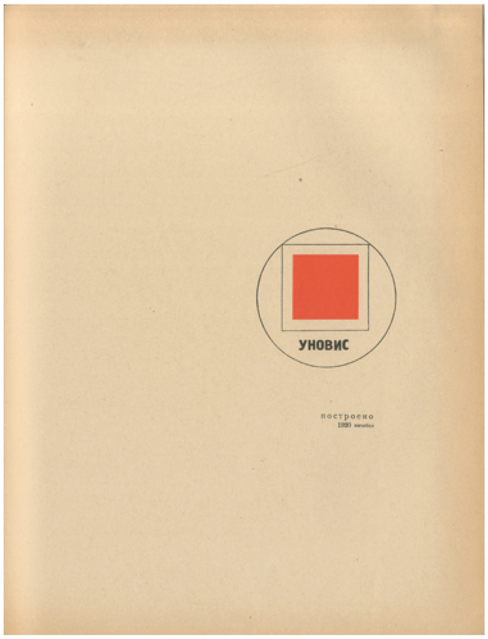
7: ‘Crash – and everything flies apart’

8: ‘And on the black was established Red Clearly’

9: ‘This is the end – let’s go on’

10: Final page: ‘Unovis constructed, Vitebsk 1920’

10: Final page: ‘Unovis constructed, Vitebsk 1920’



STORY AND NARRATIVE IN ARCHITECTURAL REPRESENTATION

The potential for a set of abstract architectural or pictorial representations to depict a narrative or tell a story through their aggregation is highlighted by El Lissitzky's short polemic children's book Of Two Squares. The abstract syntax and language of the story enables multiple simultaneous readings of the author's intentions depending upon a particular observer or reader's preconditioning.

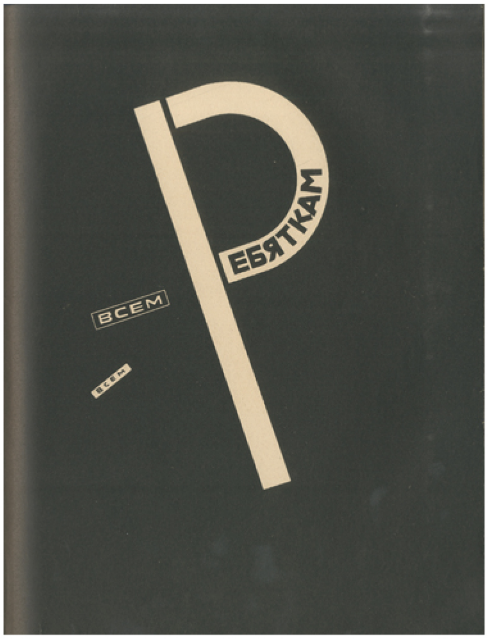
When architectural representation is accompanied by and thus obligated to the specific semantic details provided by a story or narrative it gains a more specialized set of goals and intentions. These obligations also aid in establishing parameters for judging an architectural representations' translational and transmissional successes or shortcomings. The linear nature of a story provides a guiding structure for the assembly of multiple architectural representations. The side-by-side juxtaposition of architectural representations enables syntactic techniques of spatio-formal difference and variation to enact and reinforce the semantic content of the narrative.

In El Lissitzky's 1922 children's book *Of Two Squares*, the author — an artist, architect, designer, and typographer — uses an abstract geometric syntax to enact a propagandistic story of "of two squares:" one red, one black, with their spatial interactions with other symbolic forms and colors to create an allegory for the righteous imperialistic endeavor of Communism. The two squares roam the cosmos bringing order to chaos. When they come upon a 'storm' of black disorder on the circular red planetoid of Earth, the squares aggressively intervene and crash into the commotion, decimating the existing condition and on the black establishing "Red Clearly." Like Alma Buscher's *Building-Block Game* Lissitzky uses the syntax of a geometrically minimalized abstraction as a teaching tool for children, adding a reinforcing layer of indoctrination with the allegory of Communism's mission in place of the modernist symbol of the steamboat. In a similar mindset to the thinking of the Structural Anthropologists later in the century, Lissitzky understood that a person's ability to comprehend the facets of a story are dependent on their awareness and position in life (age, education, mental orientation, etc.). A parent and proponent of the mission of the 'two squares' would understand the underlying message and intention of the book and introduce it to their child to plant the seeds of ideas that are likely beyond their abilities to yet fully comprehend.

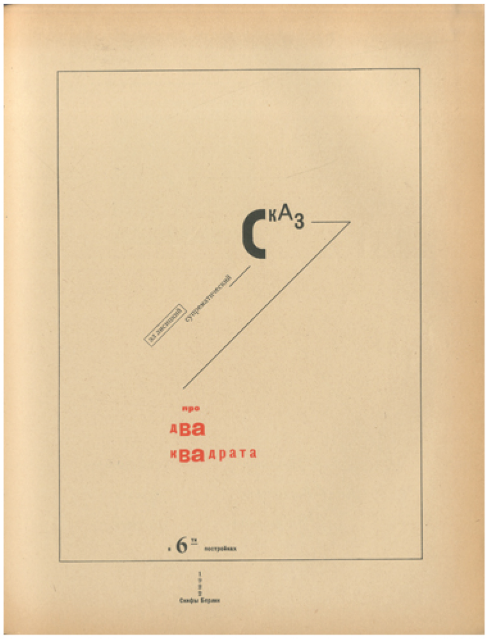
As a typographer, Lissitzky was aware of the inevitability of words, the near impossibility of separating ourselves from their grasp over our cognitive functioning. Under no circumstances does a work of art or architecture not have a name. In the academic context of the museum (the cathedral of the arts), a painting or sculpture with no title is ironically still entitled 'Untitled' with attributions to its date of creation, author, and sometimes even the date and location of the author's birth and death (if the latter is applicable). For purposes of recognizance, using words to ascribe a 'name' has become Human nature. Thus, this latent condition should not only be accepted by the author but also used to buttress the argument and reinforce the project.

Images and text opposite and following spread: El Lissitzky, Cover and pages from *Of Two Squares* prints (1922) from Lissitzky-Küppers plates.

Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968).

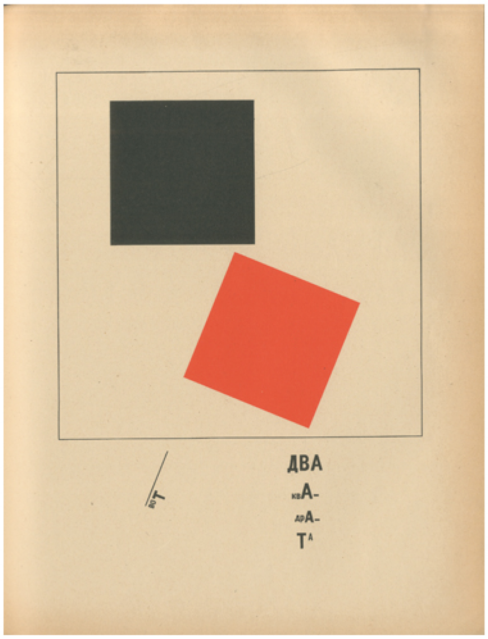

ВСЕМ
ВСЕМ
РЕБЯТКАМ

2: Dedication: 'To all, all children'


эл лисицкий
супрематический
СкАз
про
два
квадрата
в 6ти постройках
1922
Скифы Берлин

3: Title page: 'El Lissitzky / Suprematist Tale / Of Two Squares / in six games / 1922 Sky then Berlin'

4: 'Here are two squares'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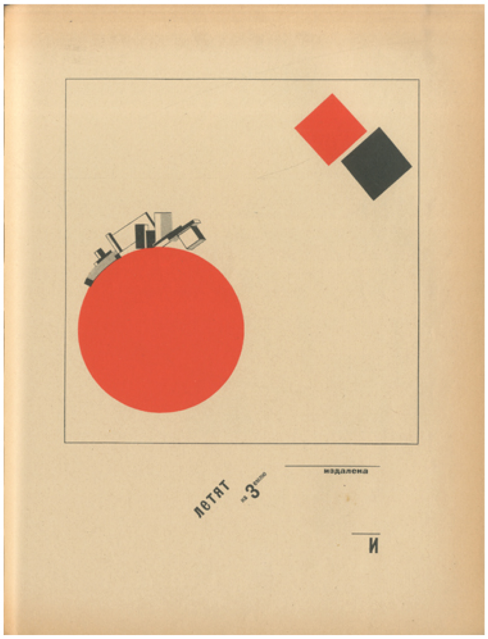
квА-
дрА-
ТА

5: 'They fly on to the Earth from far away and'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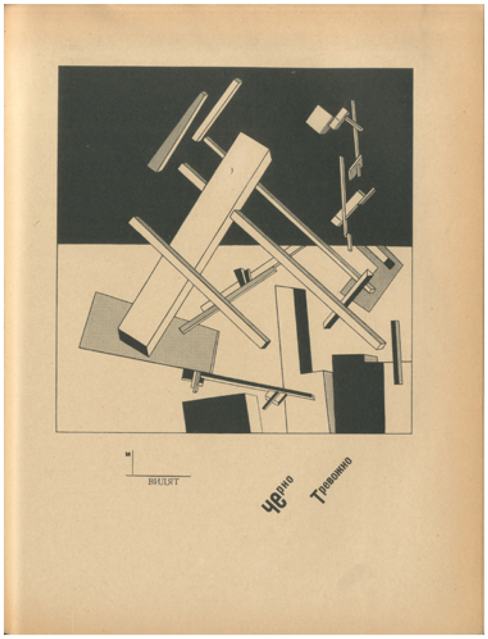
и
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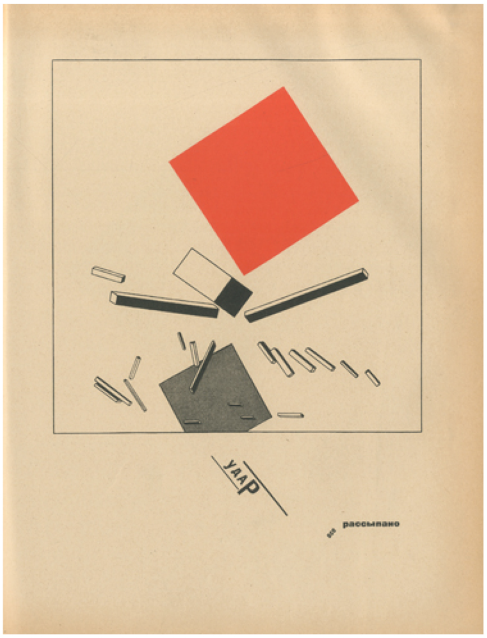
6: 'And see a black storm'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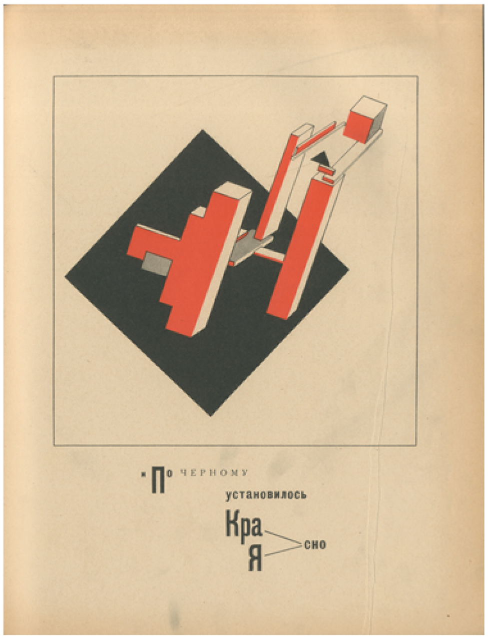
7: 'Crash – and everything flies apart'

8: 'And on the black was established Red Clearly'


По черному
установилось
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Я
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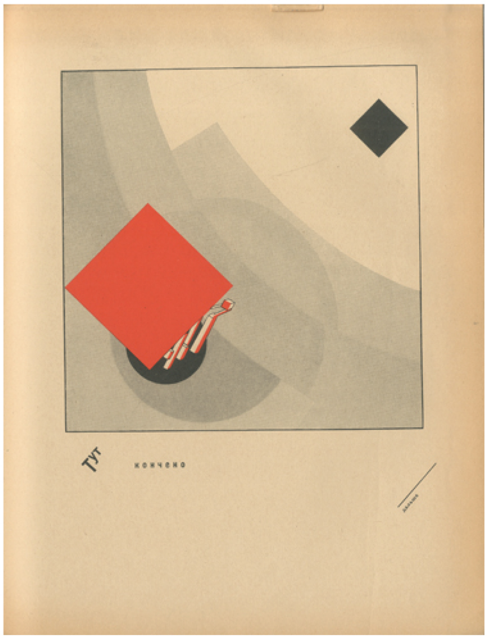
9: 'This is the end – let's go on'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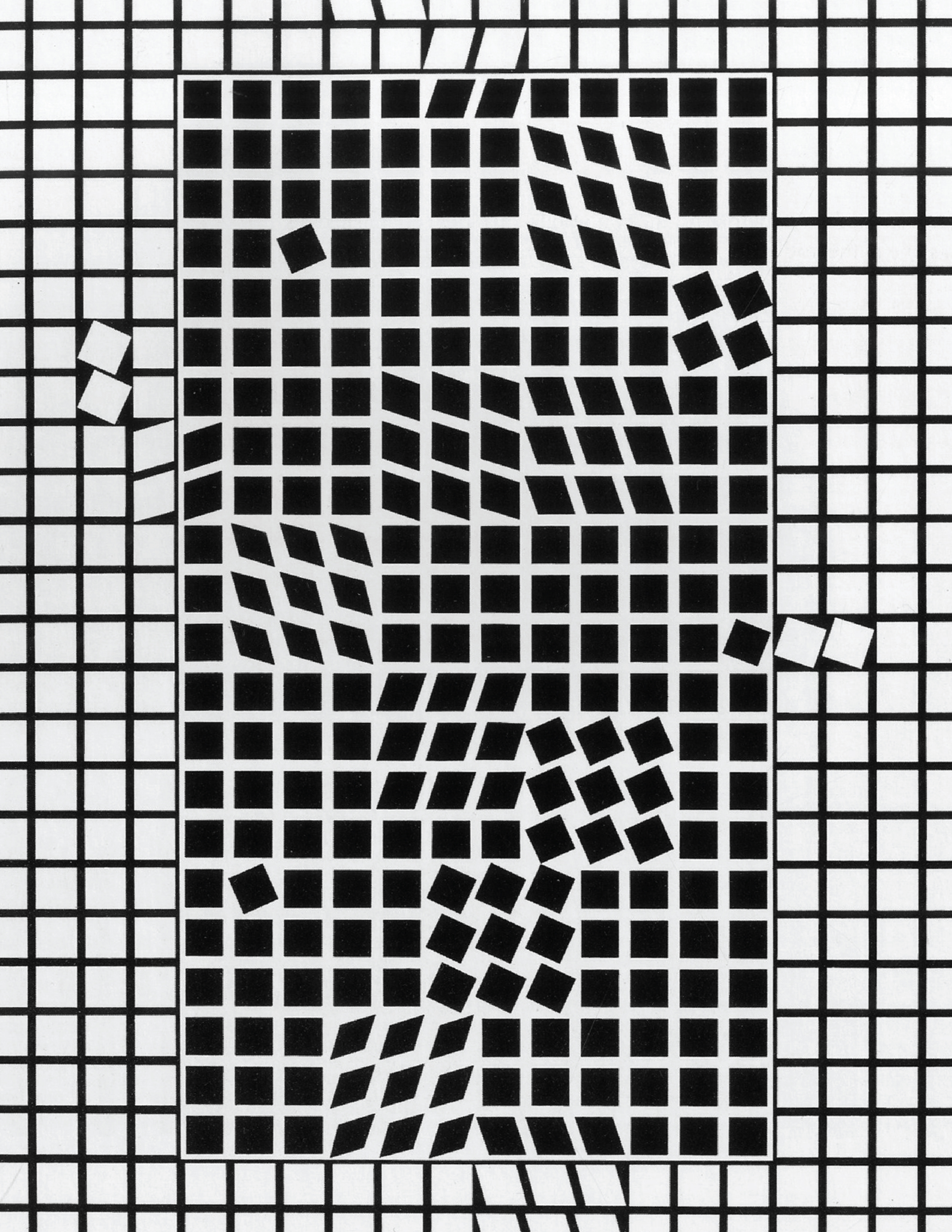


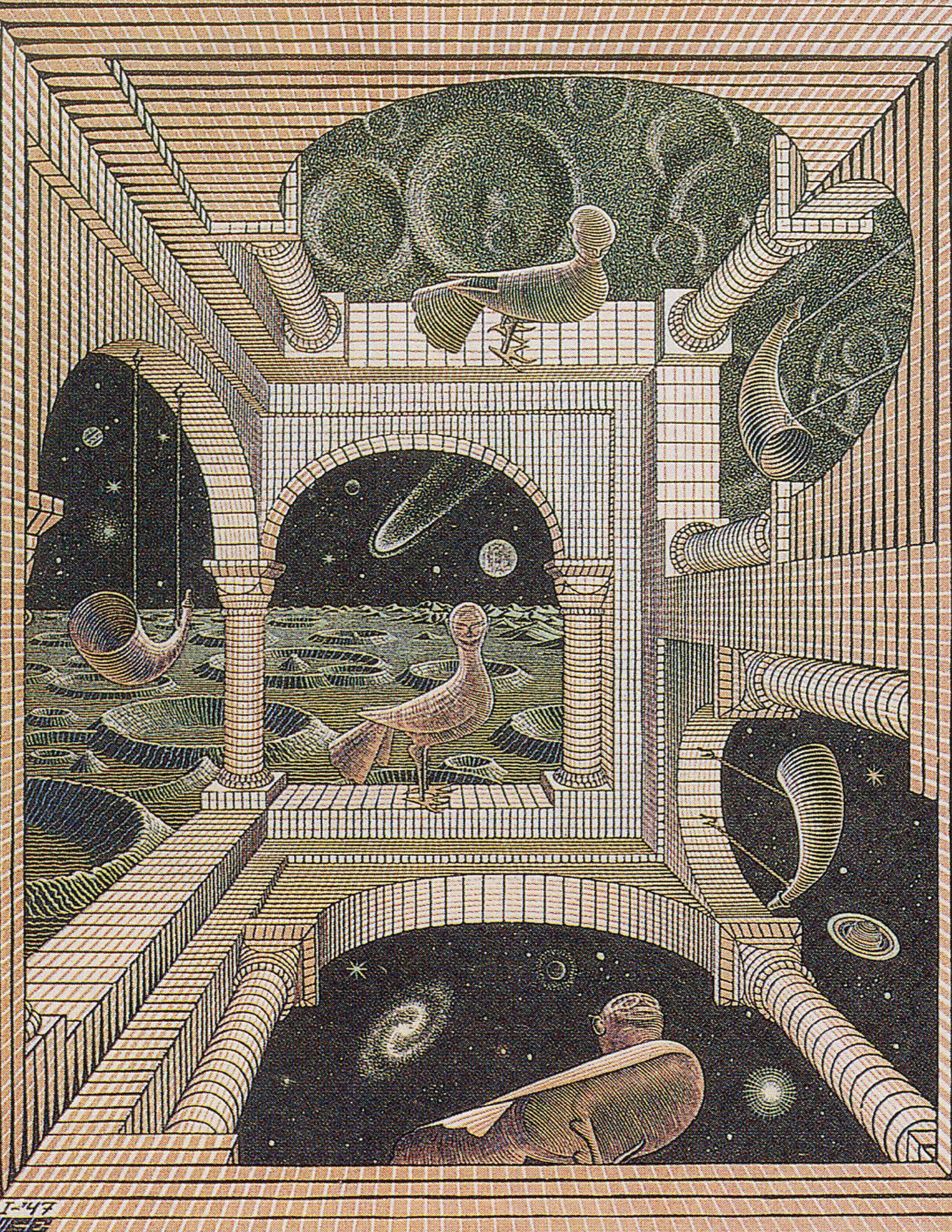
THE POSSIBILITY FOR SYNTHESIS OF THESE INTENTIONS

To conclude Part A, the spatio-visual work of Victor Vasarely is proposed as a possible synthesis of the aforementioned techniques, characteristics, and potentialities.

The projects of Victor Vasarely's later career provide an appropriately balanced synthesis of the intentions and aspirations described heretofore. They are products of homo faber, which through their visual experience provoke a highly calculated mental response. As architectural representations they create, in their pictorial space, a plane of spatial existence that could not exist without the artifact of the representation, and that did not exist before the representation was made. Abstaining from representation of the 'real,' the abstract concepts of color and form in space provided means for enabling the representation. "He developed a pictorial language whose understandability rested solely on the physiological conditions of vision." (Holzhey 8) Vasarely relied on the reality of vision, not the reality of reality, often through the technique of conspicuous deviation. By altering and deforming a regularized orthogonal Cartesian grid, a spatio-formal condition generally understood to be produce a visually stable and ordered experience, Vasarely fuses the semantic intent of his larger standing into the very nature of the syntactic structure of the pictorial space. Every decision and intention concretized within the artifact serves an architectural purpose, playing a role in the speculative, visionary, translational, and transmissional agendas of the medium of architectural representation, telling the story of an isolated spatial condition.

Image opposite: Victor Vasarely, *Bitlinko* painting (1956) from Holzey 54.

Magdalena Holzhey, *Victor Vasarely: Pure Vision* (Germany: Taschen, 2005).


I-'47

SITUATING THE PROJECT WITHIN ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

This project is positioned within the extensive discourse of Architecture inside, amongst, and alongside the spheres of three different Twentieth Century moments, each with its own purposes of reinforcement within a larger synthesis. These moments might variously be classified under the terms Paper (or what I'd prefer to call Caricature) Architecture, Utopian or Surreal Architecture, and Posthuman Architecture, each was comprised of specific work done by specific individuals within the context of their own projects and their own intentions. While the spatio-visual representational projects of M.C. Escher are not historically credited to any of these movements specifically, the nature of the impact and success of the work is likely in alignment with the aspirations of the aforementioned architectural movements. The representations were successful in their ability to portray alternative, esoteric, and unconventional spatio-formal architectural possibilities to an audience that might not have otherwise become aware of such possibilities. The project of *Isotopia* is roused from this desire.

At the meta-level, *Isotopia* takes a "both-and" position with regard to questions of projective engagement versus critical autonomy, confronting worldly issues in the age of the Anthropocene's rising planetary crisis and increasing human precarity, while also recognizing a discursive lineage of (historical) precedence, (theoretical and material) process, (disciplinary) convention, and formal articulation.

Image opposite: Maurits Cornelis (M.C.) Escher, *Different World* engraving (1947) from Thomsen 72.

Christian W. Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture: From Babylon to Virtual Reality* (New York, NY: Prestel, 1994).

Citations for the Reverends of Isotopia Part 2 Genesis, Sections 2 and 3 (in semi-chronological order):

- Reverend Étienne-Louis Boullée

  Helen Rosenau, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture* (New York, NY: Harmony Books, 1976).

- Reverend Iakov Chernikov

  Iakov Chernikhov, *Arkhitekturnye Fantazii: 101 Kompozitsiia v Kraskakh, 101 Arkhitekturnaia Miniatiura (Architectural Fantasies: 101 Compositions in Color, 101 Architectural Miniatures)* (Leningrad: Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga, 1933).

  Catherine Cooke [ed.], *Russian Avant-Garde Art and Architecture* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

  Christian W. Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture: From Babylon to Virtual Reality* (New York, NY: Prestel, 1994).

- Reverend Constant Nieuwenhuys

  Christian W. Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture: From Babylon to Virtual Reality* (New York, NY: Prestel, 1994).

  Mark Wigley, *Constant's New Babylon: The Hyper-Architecture of Desire* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1998).

- Reverend Peter Eisenman

  Peter Eisenman, *House X* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1982).

- Reverends Remment Koolhaas, Madelon Vriesendorp et al.

  Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1994, originally 1978).

  Martin van Schaik and Otakar Macel [ed.], *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-'76* (New York, NY: Prestel Publishing, 2005).

- Reverend John Hejduk

  John Hejduk [ed. Kim Shkapich], *Mask of Medusa: Works, 1947-1983* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1985).

- Reverend Aldo Rossi

  Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Drawings* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 2008).

  Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Progetti e Disegni 1962-1979* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1979).

- Reverend Raimund Abraham

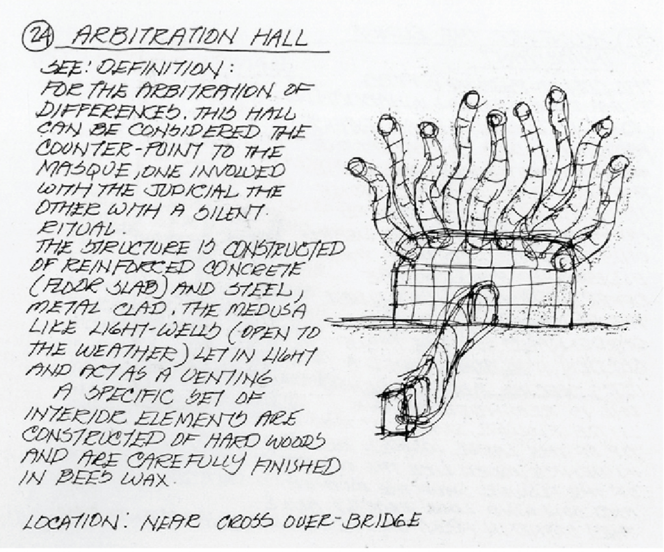
  Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

  Raimund Abraham, *Ungebaut/Unbuilt* (Bozen, Innsbruck: Galerie Museum, Galerie Krinzinger: 1986).

- Reverends Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin

  Alexander Brodsky, Brodsky & Utkin: P*aper Architecture in the Real World* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1993).

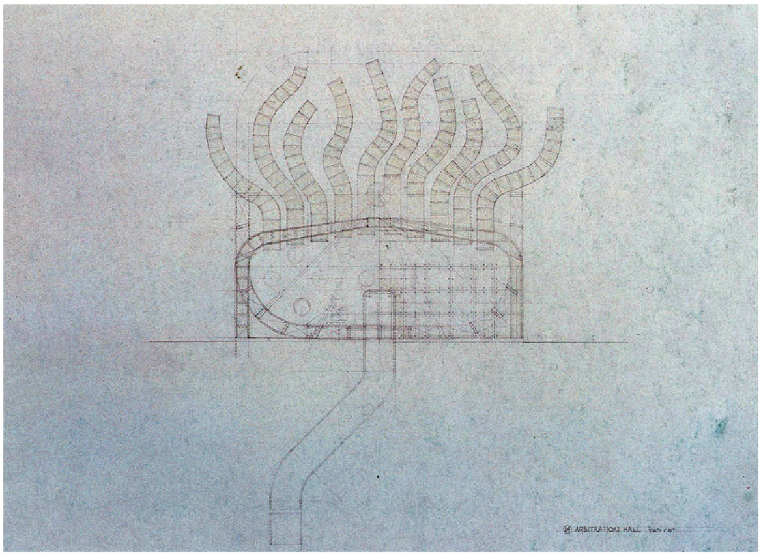
  Lois E. Nesbitt, *Brodsky & Utkin* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991).

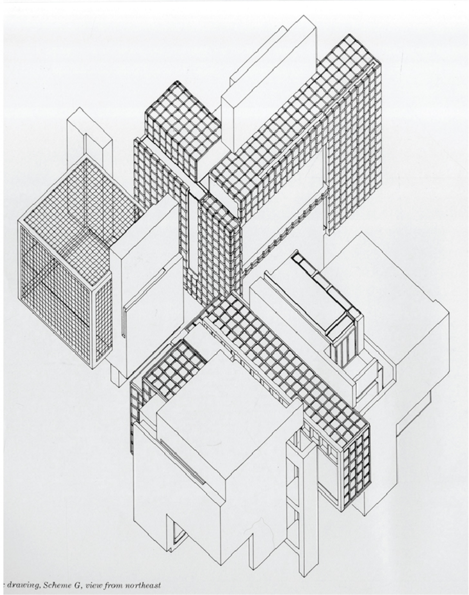


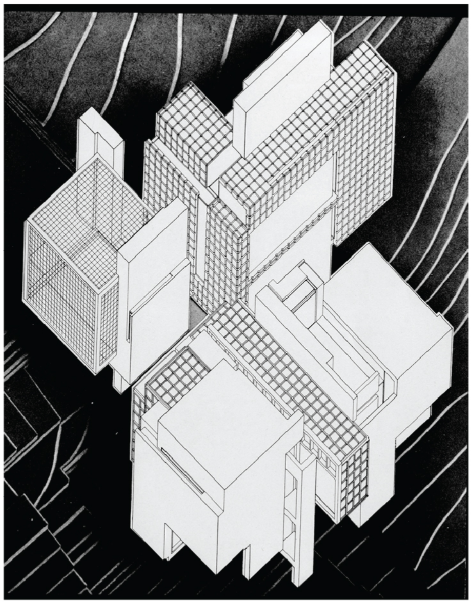
24 ARBITRATION HALL

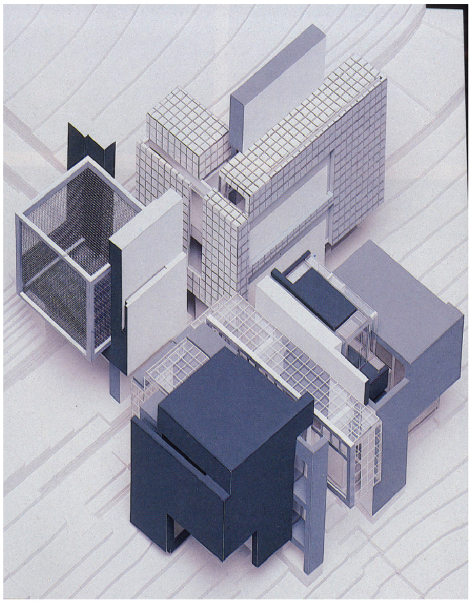
SEE: DEFINITION:
FOR THE ARBITRATION OF
DIFFERENCES. THIS HALL
CAN BE CONSIDERED THE
COUNTER-POINT TO THE
MASQUE, ONE INVOLVED
WITH THE JUDICIAL THE
OTHER WITH A SILENT
RITUAL.
THE STRUCTURE IS CONSTRUCTED
OF REINFORCED CONCRETE
(FLOOR SLAB) AND STEEL,
METAL CLAD. THE MEDUSA
LIKE LIGHT-WELLS (OPEN TO
THE WEATHER) LET IN LIGHT
AND ACT AS A VENTING
A SPECIFIC SET OF
INTERIOR ELEMENTS ARE
CONSTRUCTED OF HARD WOODS
AND ARE CAREFULLY FINISHED
IN BEES WAX.

LOCATION: NEAR CROSS OVER-BRIDGE


24 ARBITRATION HALL


drawing, Scheme G, view from northeast





PAPER-CARICATURE ARCHITECTURE

The term 'Paper Architecture' refers to a kind of architectural representation that is created without the desire or intention to transcend the medium of the representation. The examples selected might better be referred to as 'Caricature Architecture,' as the work has the opportunity to exhibit qualities of character and disposition that are exaggerated beyond the capacities of more conventional methods of architectural discourse and practice.

Portraits by John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman [on the following spread] perhaps reinforce this point. The portraits allow for each architect to formulate representational expressions of their selves, as caricatured personalities within an alternative, highly conceptualized reality.

John Hejduk's 1979-'83 *Berlin Masque* project ascribes overtly Human characteristics of personality and temperament to the architectural attributes of program, formal language, and material assembly in his endeavor to make manifest the internalized features of his own thinking.

Peter Eisenman's early work, particularly the 1975 design for *House X*, underscores the architect's manipulation of the internal workings of the discipline of architecture for his own autonomous desires. *House X* is not necessarily a house as much as it is a vehicle for the architect's visions and viewpoints.

Images opposite: [above] John Hejduk, *Berlin Masque, Arbitration Hall* sketch and rendering (c.1980) from Hejduk 148, 419; [below] Peter Eisenman, *House X* axonometric drawings and models (c.1975) from Eisenman 6, 210, 211.

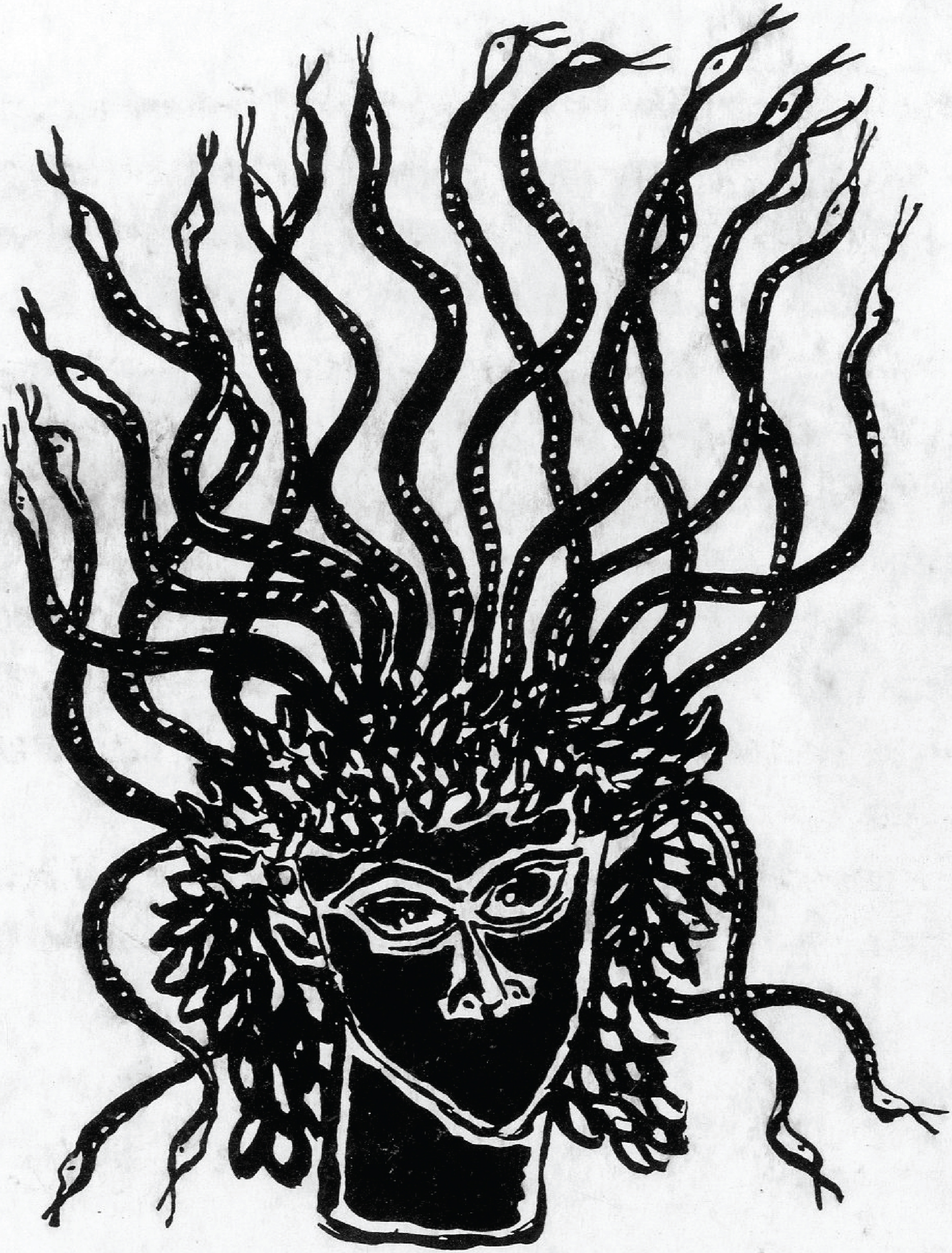
Following spread: [left] John Hejduk, *Self-Portrait* "masque" drawing from Hejduk frontispiece; [right] Peter Eisenman, *Self-Portrait* drawing from Eisenman 168.

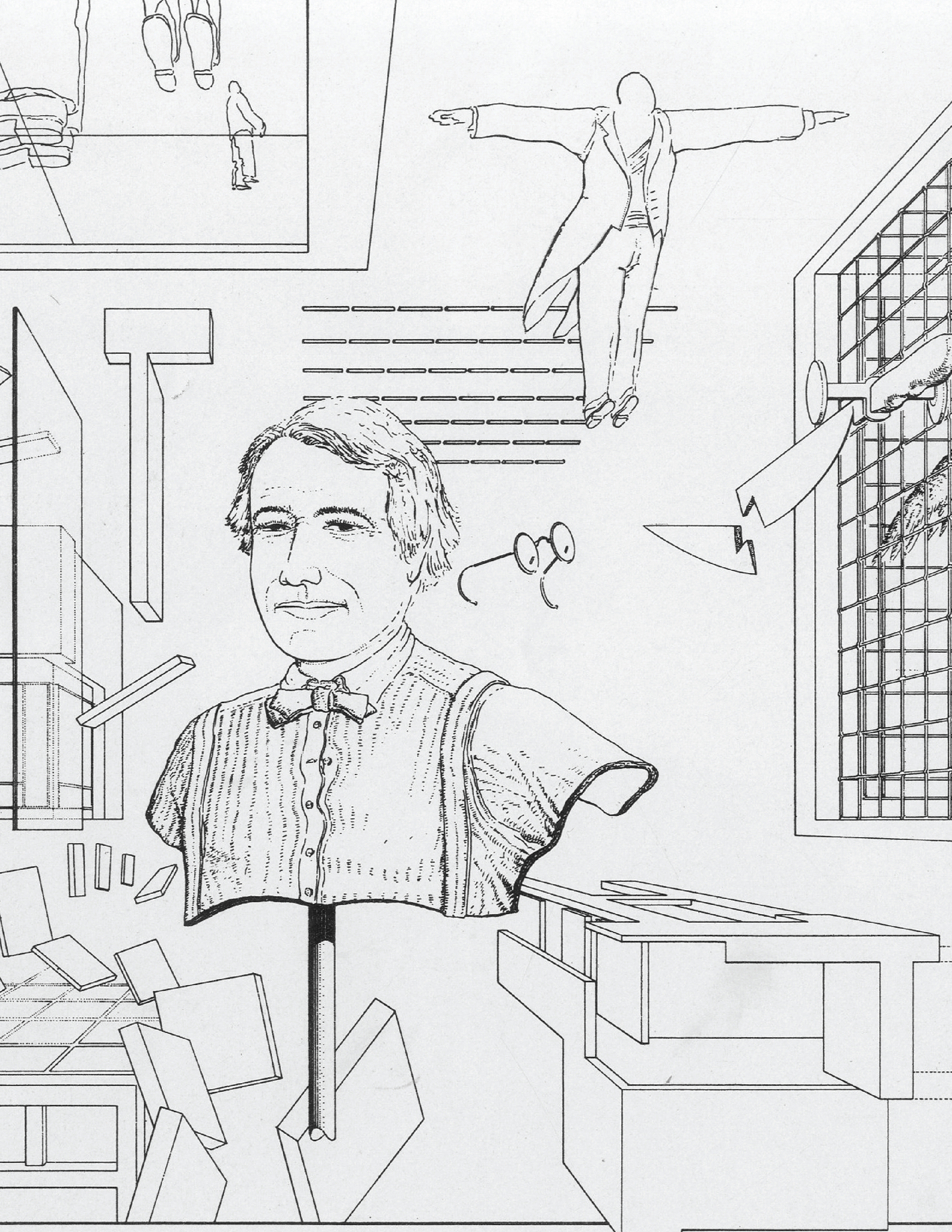
See also: Alexander Brodsky and Ilya Utkin.

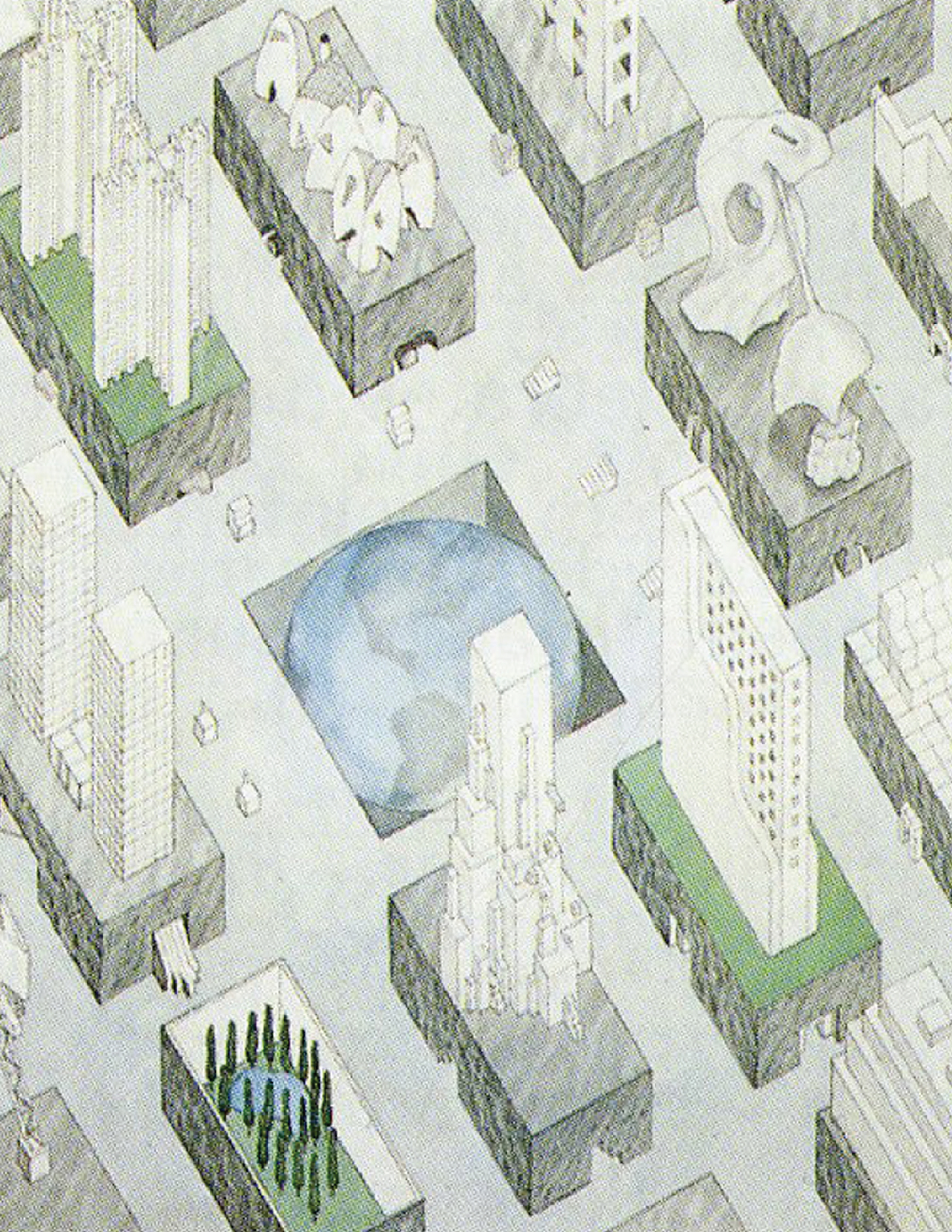
Alexander Brodsky, *Brodsky & Utkin: Paper Architecture in the Real World* (Portland, OR: Portland Art Museum, 1993).

Peter Eisenman, *House X* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1982).

John Hejduk [ed. Kim Shkapich], *Mask of Medusa: Works, 1947-1983* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1985).







UTOPIAN-SURREAL ARCHITECTURE

Utopian or Surreal Architecture can be described as taking this mindset a step further, to depict an alternate yet recognizable reality or dimension of reality. Rem Koolhaas' early projects, including his 1972 Architectural Association *School of Architecture* thesis project and those cataloged in his 1978 *Delirious New York* manifesto as an appendix for a "Fictional Conclusion," take full advantage of the capacity for architectural representation to negotiate these alternative visionary realms.

The projects play out speculative plots, hypothetically sited in places like London and Manhattan, but arguably more attentively, comfortably, and thoroughly sited within the architects' minds and their ability to make manifest their utopian visions in the confines and boundaries of architectural discourse and representation — which should partly be credited to his collaborator and illustrator, Madelon Vriesendorp.

The project for the 1972 *City of the Captive Globe* exists in a fictional site that indirectly alludes to urban principles of Cartesian Manhattan and the inherent potential, under these conditions, for the building block to exist as an isolated Petri dish of experimentation within the divisive grid of streets.

The *Hotel Sphinx* project attempts to forge a new typology for a typical Manhattan wedge site footprint, which he claims as one of the few exceptions to not have developed its own typology organically. He dedicates the Sphinx to the amenities of "physical culture and relaxation."

The *Story of the Pool* allegorizes the Russian Constructivist movement of 1923 Moscow as the manifestation of a literal, dynamic architectural construct within a fictional utopian world, tracking the movement's development and migration to its "logical" home, New York City.

Image opposite: Rem Koolhaas et al., *City of the Captive Globe* axonometric rendering (1972) from Koolhaas 295.

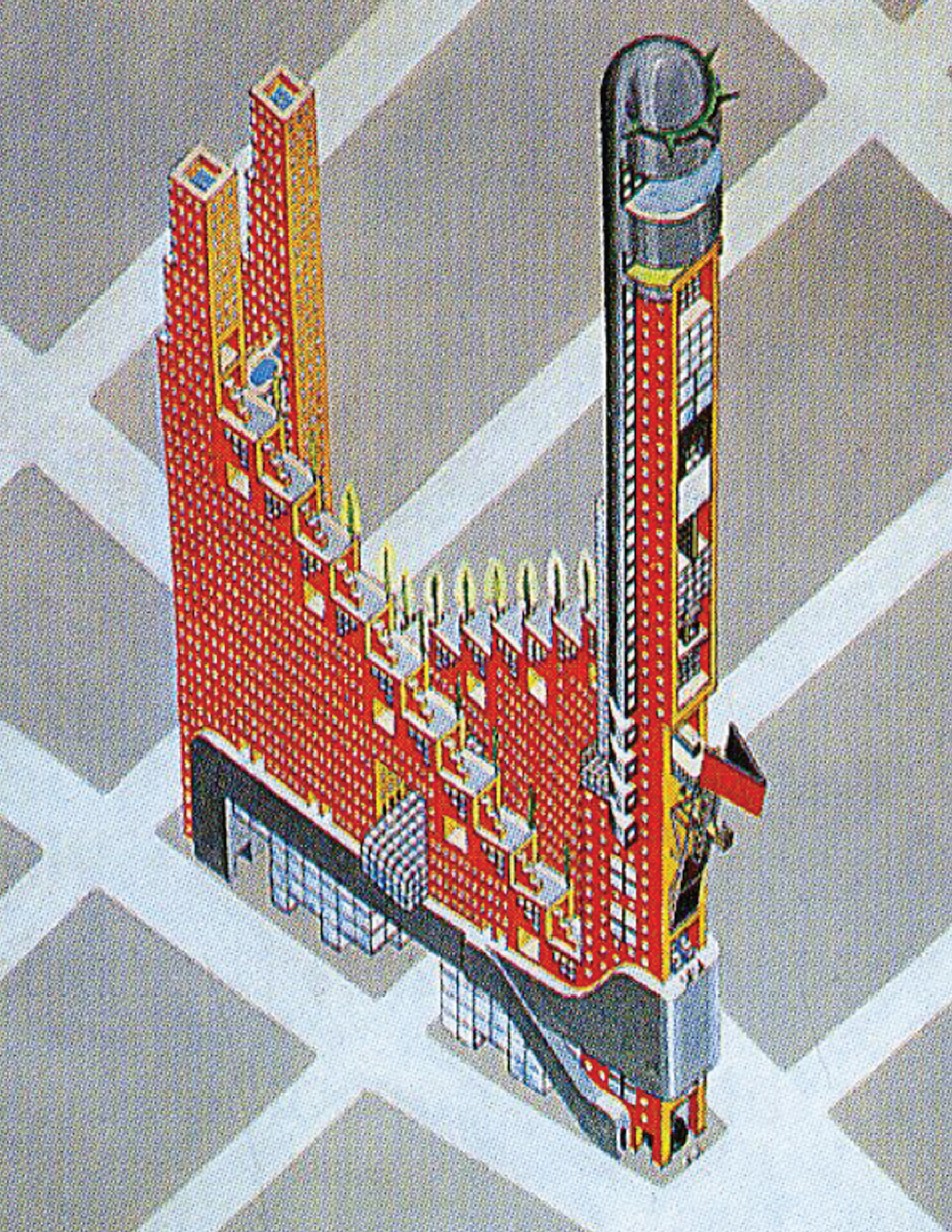
Following spread: [left] Rem Koolhaas et al., *Hotel Sphinx* axonometric rendering (1975-'76) from Koolhaas 298; [right] Rem Koolhaas et al., *Story of the Pool* perspective rendering (1977) from Koolhaas 309.

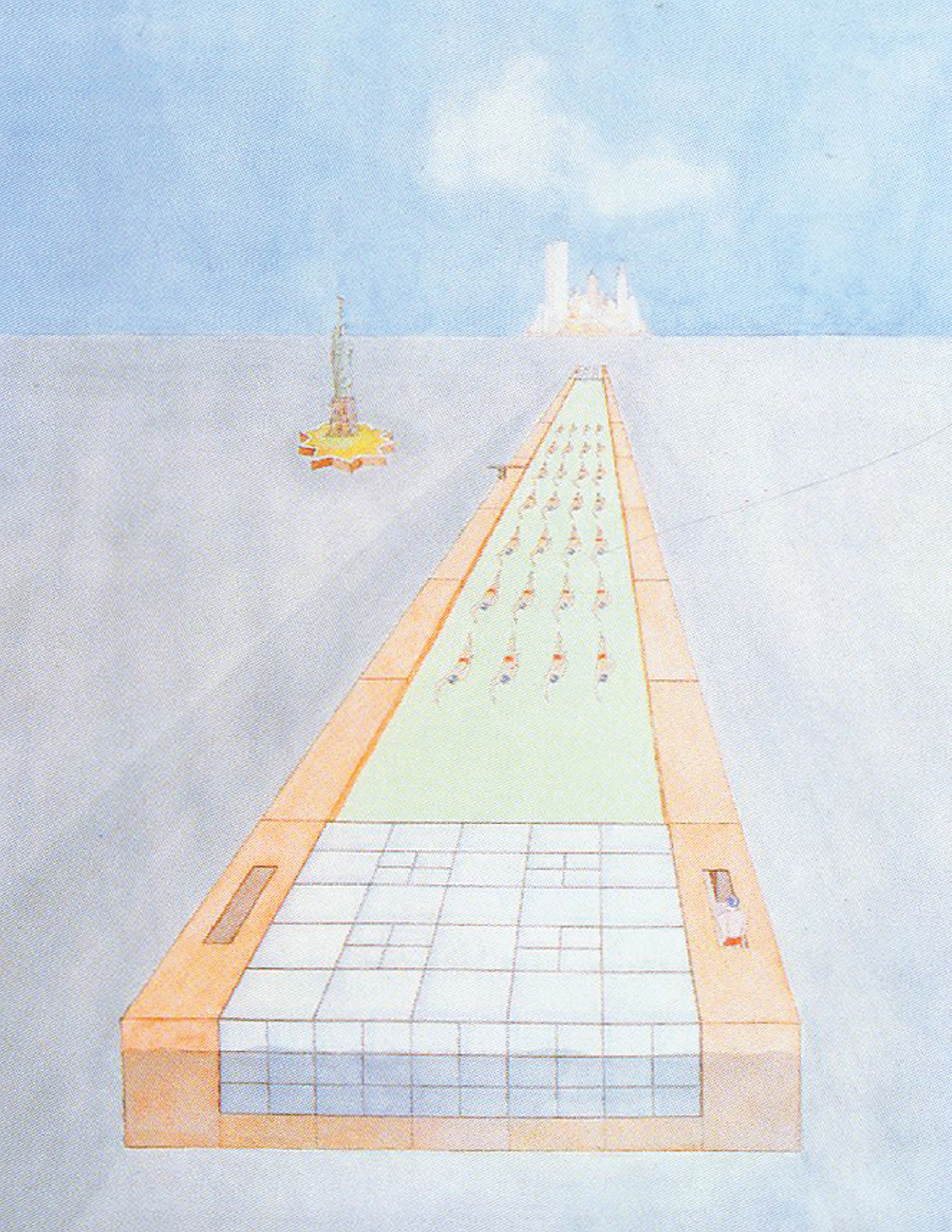
See also: R. Buckminster Fuller, Iakov Chernikov.

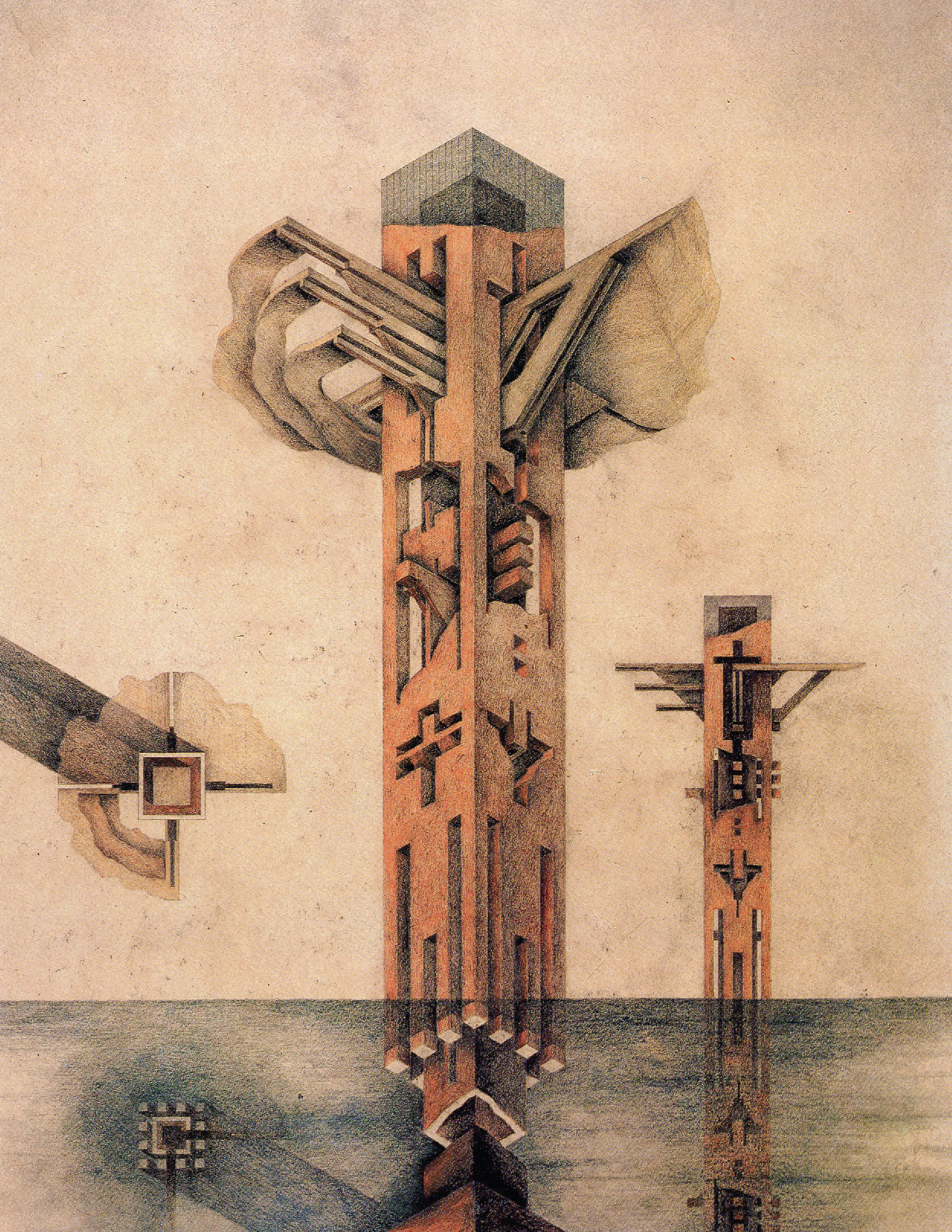
Iakov Chernikhov, *Arkhitekturnye Fantazii: 101 Kompozitsiia v Kraskakh, 101 Arkhitekturnaia Miniatiura (Architectural Fantasies: 101 Compositions in Color, 101 Architectural Miniatures)* (Leningrad: Mezhdunarodnaia Kniga, 1933).

R. Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1994, originally 1978).







POSTHUMAN ARCHITECTURE

This conceptual architecturalization of evolving ideologies or hypothetical conditions of existence is pushed perhaps to its limits in architecture concerning the Posthuman, which explores speculative scenarios of architecture beyond or without Human Beings, and is exemplified by the work of Raimund Abraham.

The 1979-'80 project for the *Tower of Wisdom* is predicated on the hypothesis that the knowledge and wisdom accumulated by Humans will outlast Human existence. This idea is architecturally concretized in the programmatic form of a monumental and enduring library. The volumetric articulation of the project serves as an abstract expression of accumulated knowledge in monumental stereotomic form. This is also true in the *Last House* project of 1984, which ironically envisions a construct made to house Humans in a Posthuman scenario.

In both cases, the architectural representation which makes manifest the project's conceptual standing is not beholden to the physical needs of Human inhabitants, but rather to the larger principles and properties which underlie and aid in establishing the larger concept. The composite overlay technique utilized in the *Tower of Wisdom* implies a sort of Posthuman simultaneity of vision that is not restricted by the restrictions of two physical eyes on a singular body at a specific time and place in space.

Image opposite: Raimund Abraham, *Tower of Wisdom* rendering (1984) from Abraham *[Un]built* 155, *Ungebaut* 53.

Following spread: Raimund Abraham, *Last House* rendering (1979-'80) from Abraham *[Un]built* 108, *Ungebaut* 39.

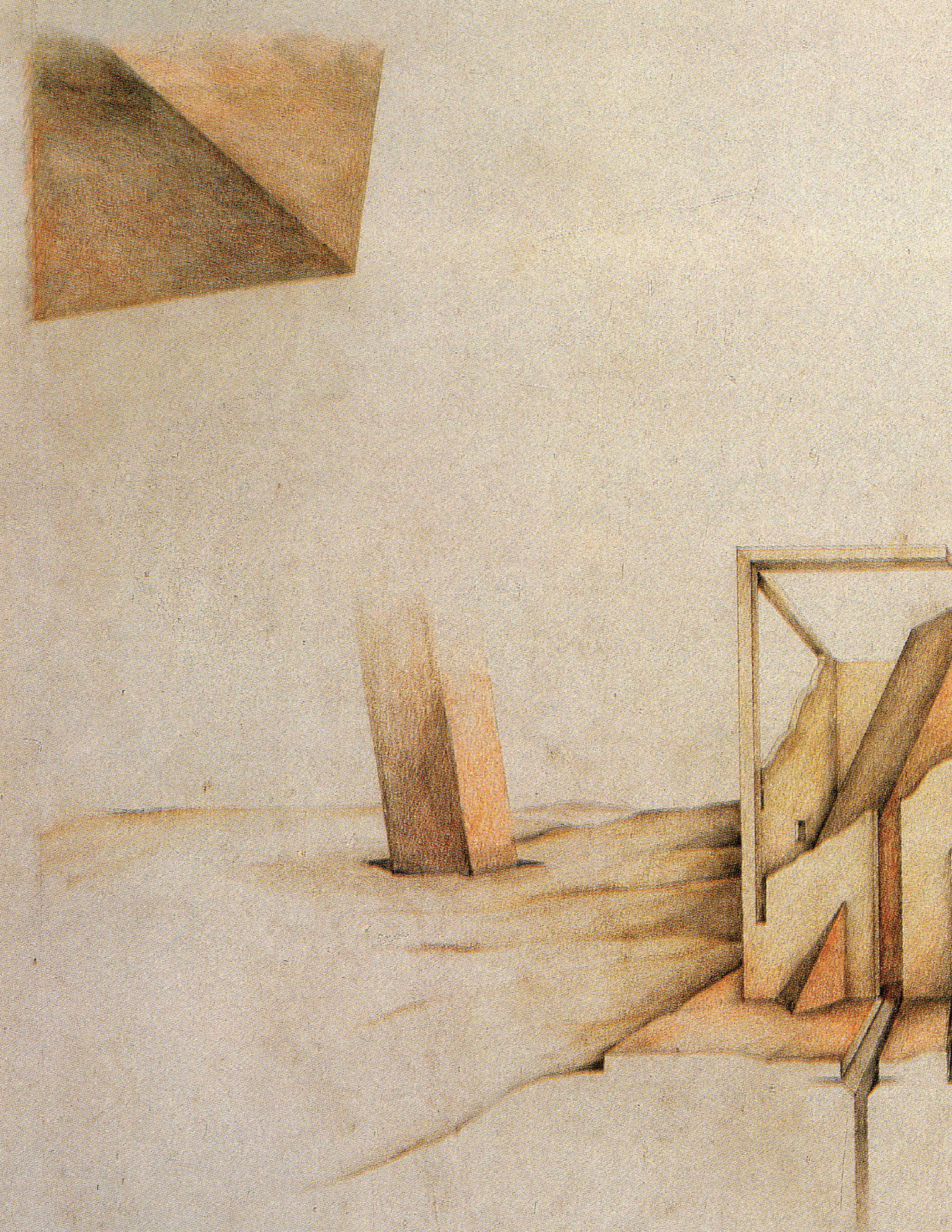
See also: Massimo Scolari, Aldo Rossi.

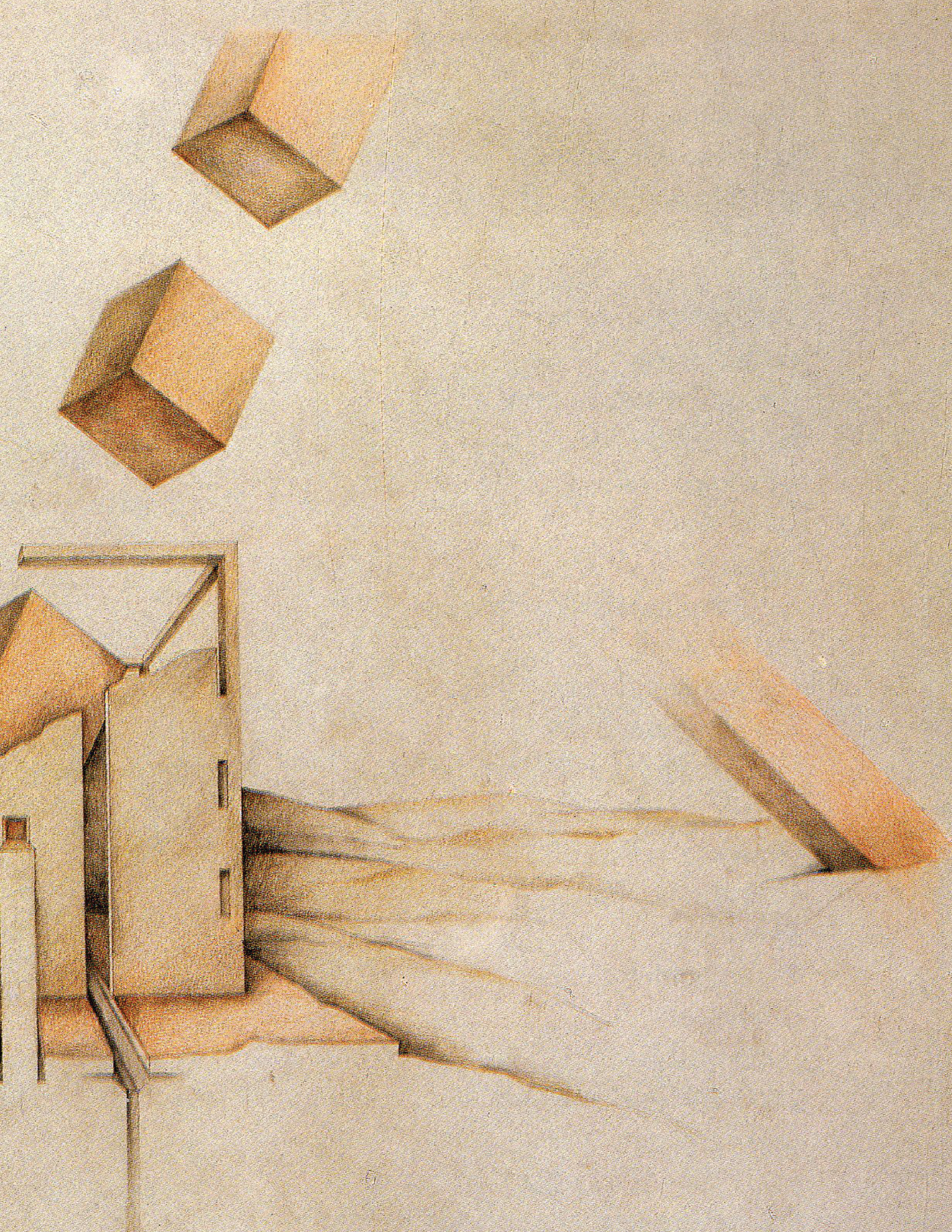
Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

Raimund Abraham, *Ungebaut/Unbuilt* (Bozen, Innsbruck: Galerie Museum, Galerie Krinzinger: 1986).

Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Progetti e Disegni 1962-1979* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1979).

Massimo Scolari, *Massimo Scolari, Architecture Between Memory and Hope* (New York, NY: Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and MIT Press, 1980).





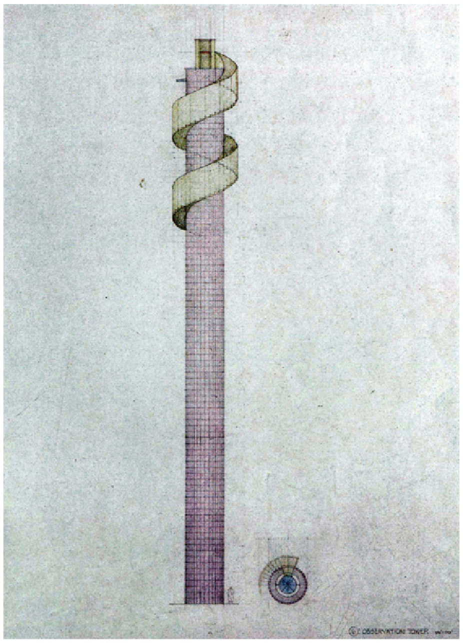
Cotman Water Colours
8ml 0.27 U.S. fl.oz
Ultramarine 660
Viridian Hue 696
Cadmium Yellow Hue 109
FABER-CASTELL
PITT artist pen
B
S
copic sketch
LOEW-CORNELL
GLAZE 659 CHINA
SHADER 659 CHINA
BIC
MICRON 005
MICRON 02
#1 ARCHIVAL INK
XSDK05#36
AP

THE QUESTION OF MEDIUM IN THE SELECTED ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

The three moments share notable commonalities. The works of both Hejduk and Eisenman sometimes require a suspension of disbelief from the conventional expectations of architectural practice. The existential fantasies of Koolhaas and Vriesendorp, and the visionary futures of Abraham further this proposition.

The isolated worlds of the projects and their architecture can only exist in the medium of their representation, the particularities of which are beholden to the techniques and technologies contemporaneously available at the time of the endeavor of the project. At the time of these precedent's creations, the mediums with the arguably greatest capacity for architectural representation and expression were limited to hand drawing and hand modeling. With the ever-increasing availability and versatility of contemporary digital technology, countless additional means for visualization and representation have arisen, but the purposes of this project remain in aspirant harmony with the aforementioned forefathers — and mothers — chosen from the discourse. The difference in the physical medium of graphite versus plotter ink or hand drafting and modeling versus computer modeling and rendering is therefore subjugated by a desire for accuracy with respect to the overarching concepts of texture, shadow, spatial configuration, as well as the obvious concern for precision of expression.

Image opposite: Photograph by the author, a small fraction of the representational media available.



⑥ OBSERVATION TOWER

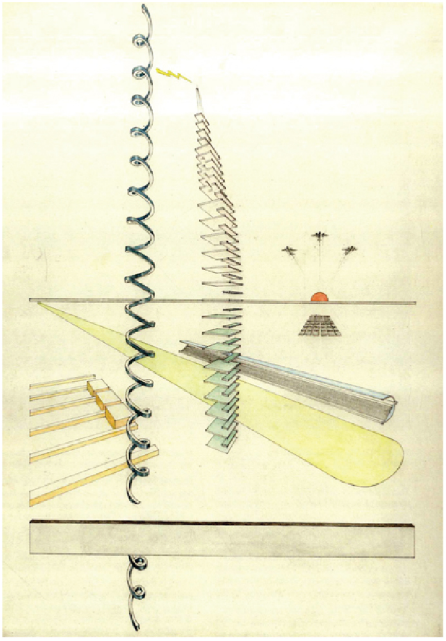
BASICALLY A PUBLIC TOWER.
IT IS NEAR THE BERLIN WALL.
IT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
24 HOURS A DAY, (AROUND
THE CLOCK).
ONLY ONE PERSON AT A
TIME IS PERMITTED UP THE
TOWER. THE PERSON TAKES
THE ELEVATOR UP TO THE
TOP ZONE, THE PERSON THEN
GOES ON BY FOOT WITHIN A
METAL STAIRCASE THAT
SPIRALS AROUND THE GRANITE
TOWER. WHEN THE PERSON
COMES DOWN THE OTHER CAN
GO UP. THERE IS NO LIMIT OF
TIME THAT ONE CAN STAY.

HEIGHT : 180'
WIDTH :

STRUCTURE: REINFORCED CONCRETE
GRANITE STONE FACED
STAIRWAY STEEL.

LOCATION: FRIEDRICHSTRASSE
NEAR THE WALL.

STEEL
STONE
CONC.



THE PARK OF AGGRESSION

This is the second park in the city. It was laid out at the same time as the square of the Captive Globe, and is next to it. In this recreational area, rudimentary structures were erected to correct and channel aggressive desires into creative confrontations.

The ego-world dialectic which unfolds in the adjoining square, generates the continuous emergence of conflicting ideologies. Their imposed coexistence invokes childish dreams and the desire to play. This park is a reservoir of sustained tension waiting to be used: a gigantic playground of flexible dimensions to accommodate the only sport played in the strip: Aggression.

Here, the conflicts between corresponding antagonisms are re-enacted and fought out: the battles that are staged dissolve the corrosive hysteria of good manners. In fact on an individual level, this park is a sanatorium where patients recover from remnants of infections they brought with them from the old world: hypocrisy and genocide. The diagnoses provoke richer forms of intercourse.

The most prominent edifices are the two towers. One of them is infinite: a continuous spiral stretched out of an elastic piece of rock. The other tower has a familiar architectural style and consists of 42 platforms. Magnetic fields help create a tension between these towers which mirrors the psychological motivations of their users.

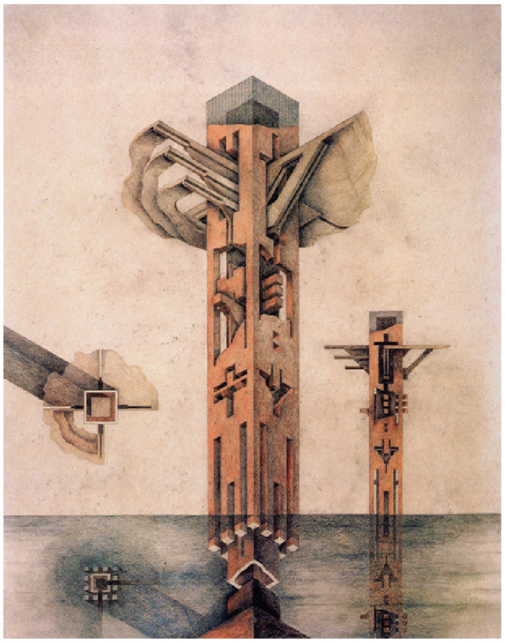
Entry to the park is free, and performances continuous. Visitors arrive alone, in pairs or small groups; the electrifying uncertainty about the safety of the square tower is compensated by the aggressive confidence of the players. Visitors withdraw into the shelves inside the tower which contains cells for the use of suppressed hatred, and where contestants freely abuse each other.

But the shelves are also viewing galleries overlooking the bigger platforms of the tower, and private antagonists become spectators. As such they are provoked into joining larger groups involved in unknown physical transactions below, which expose an amazing side of violence. As remnants of shyness are overcome, they add their private energies to this incredibly demanding and mutant form of sociable behaviour. In an agitated sleep, they walk higher up in the tower. As they pierce each floor, they experience an infinite variety of exchanges, they get an increasingly good view of things below, and an exhilarating, new sensation of the unfolding spectacle around their architecture of great heights.

As their tower leans forward, they push their antagonist into the abysmal fall inside the relentless spiral of introspection. Its digestive movement consumes excessive softness: it is the combustion chamber for the fat under the skin. The human missiles, helped by the centrifugal acceleration, escape through a chosen opening in the walls of the spiral, objects of terrifying energy into a trajectory of irresistible temptations. The entire surface of the park, the air space above and the cavities below it are now a full-scale battlefield. As the operations continue into the night they take the appearance of hallucinatory celebrations, against the backdrop of an abandoned world of calculated extermination, and polite immobility.

As they return from their nocturnal adventures they celebrate their collective victories in a gigantic arena that crosses the park diagonally.

The small buildings in the corner of the park are old building barracks used for the construction of the towers now used as changing rooms. In the three large halls (the old site offices) pacts are signed and new relationships consolidated.



TOWER OF WISDOM
Site: Misericordia

"I suspect that the human species – the unique species – is about to be extinguished, but the library will endure: illuminated, solitary, infinite, perfectly motionless, equipped with precious volumes, useless, incorruptible, secret."

from:"The Library of Babel", by Jorge Luis Borges

TEXT AND IMAGE IN THE SELECTED ARCHITECTURAL DISCOURSE

An overarching commonality between the aforementioned projects is their dependence on both image and text. Through differing approaches and particularities, the image is utilized as an element of mystery and enticement, providing a visual spectacle for the view, while the text supplies performative and technical details, supplementing the spectacle of the image with additional character and specification and generating a sort of poetic experience.

Hejduk's use of text can be viewed as a part of the sketching and preliminary design process, establishing definitions and parameters for each of his architectural vignettes, and in the final product as a means of documenting and relaying these definitions and parameters.

Koolhaas' work appears to enact text as part of a narrative depiction or situation of his projects, being highly calculative with his words the postproduction phases, documenting the projects' processes and intentions, and bringing light to some sort of discursive or existential condition.

The architectural work of Abraham is emphatically poetic. A short quote from the Borges parable on the *Library of Babel* provides the conceptual basis for the *Tower of Wisdom*. An architectural project is produced from a brief rumination on the future of Human existence with respect to the accumulated body of Human knowledge. Other Abraham projects use text as an almost equal and symbiotic component to the imagery. The project *Last House* is recounted textually as the product of a vivid dream that the author experienced and then recorded, in the form of both architectural sketches, renderings and prose.

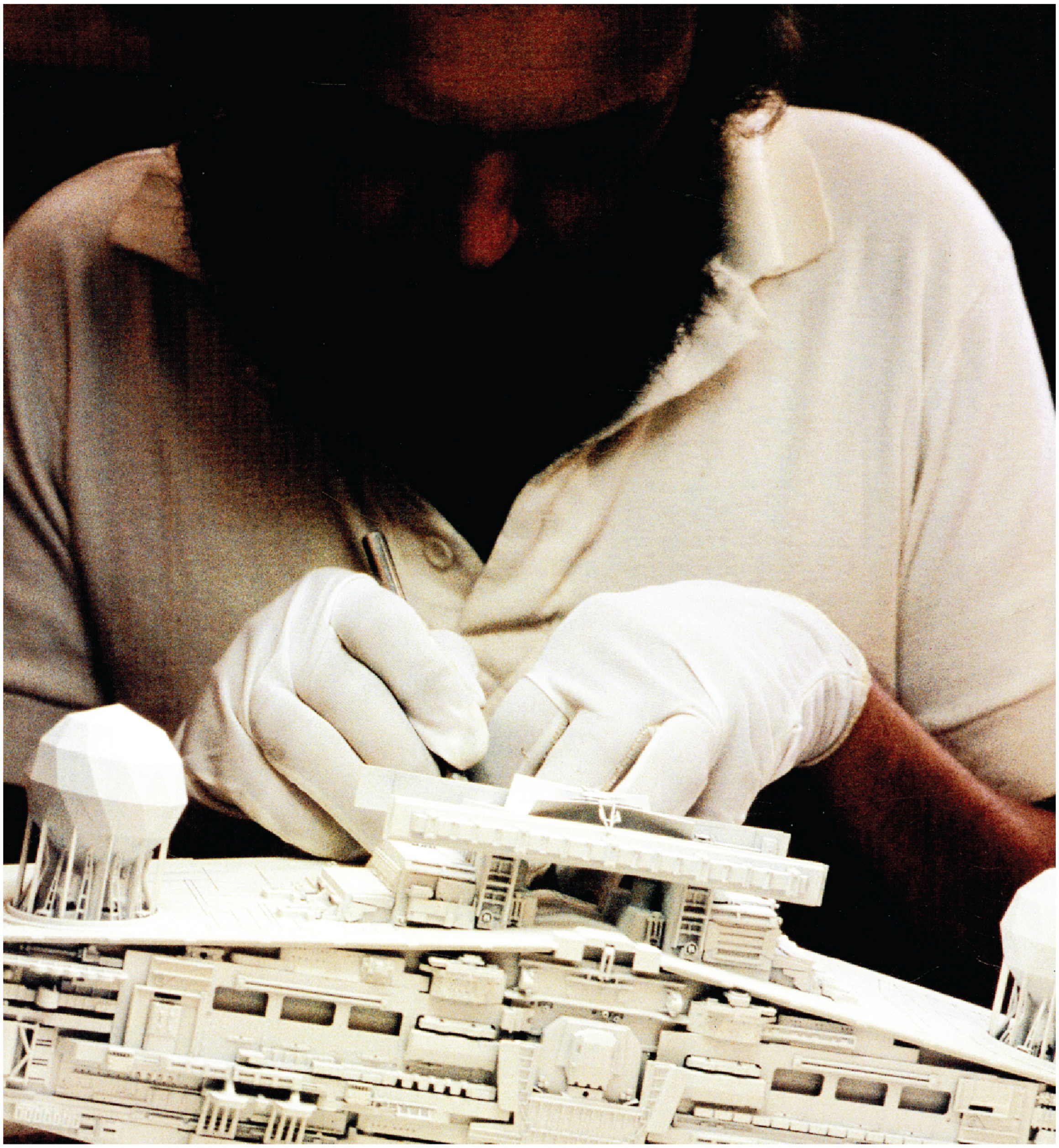
In the making of *Isotopia*, the text and image serve in a back-and-forth dialectic of design-creation and narration-construction. The text of *Isotopia* is a product of a desire to give voice to the physical artifacts of the project to expose their embedded ideas. The image of *Isotopia* is a product of the visual experience of the physical artifacts of the project, either corporeally in three dimensions, or remotely in the two dimensional documentation of photography. In the presentation of *Isotopia*, the text and image are dependent upon a symbiotic and calculated marriage with another, in the ritualized experience of *Isotopia*.

Images opposite: [left to right] John Hejduk, *Berlin Masque, Observation Tower* elevation rendering and sketch text (c.1980) from Hejduk 407, 142; Rem Koolhaas et al., *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, The Park of Aggression* rendering and text (1972) from Schaik 250; Raimund Abraham, *Tower of Wisdom* rendering and text (1984) from Abraham 154-155.

Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

John Hejduk [ed. Kim Shkapich], *Mask of Medusa: Works, 1947-1983* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1985).

Martin van Schaik and Otakar Macel [ed.], *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-'76* (New York, NY: Prestel Publishing, 2005).



TEXT AND IMAGE AND MEDIUM IN THE ISOTOPIA OF STAR WARS

> Your focus determines your reality.
>
> Stated by Qui-Gon Jin, a character played by Liam Neeson in *Star Wars Episode I*

Through the lens of text and image, the architectural project that is the world of *Star Wars* serves as an influential and potent precedent. With a simple sentence, "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away…." the project disavows itself of any requirement to 'realistically' portray the world we inhabit and abandon its commonly held principles, properties and conventions. The place portrayed is established to exist in a far-off dimension of time and in a faraway dimension of space. This small caveat enables the viewer's suspension of disbelief and acts as a device of justification for the sake of plausibility. Thus the fictional planet of Tatooine, in its binary-star solar system, depicted with its various unique architectural vernaculars and apparatuses, is ascribed with legitimacy; the spectacle is validated.

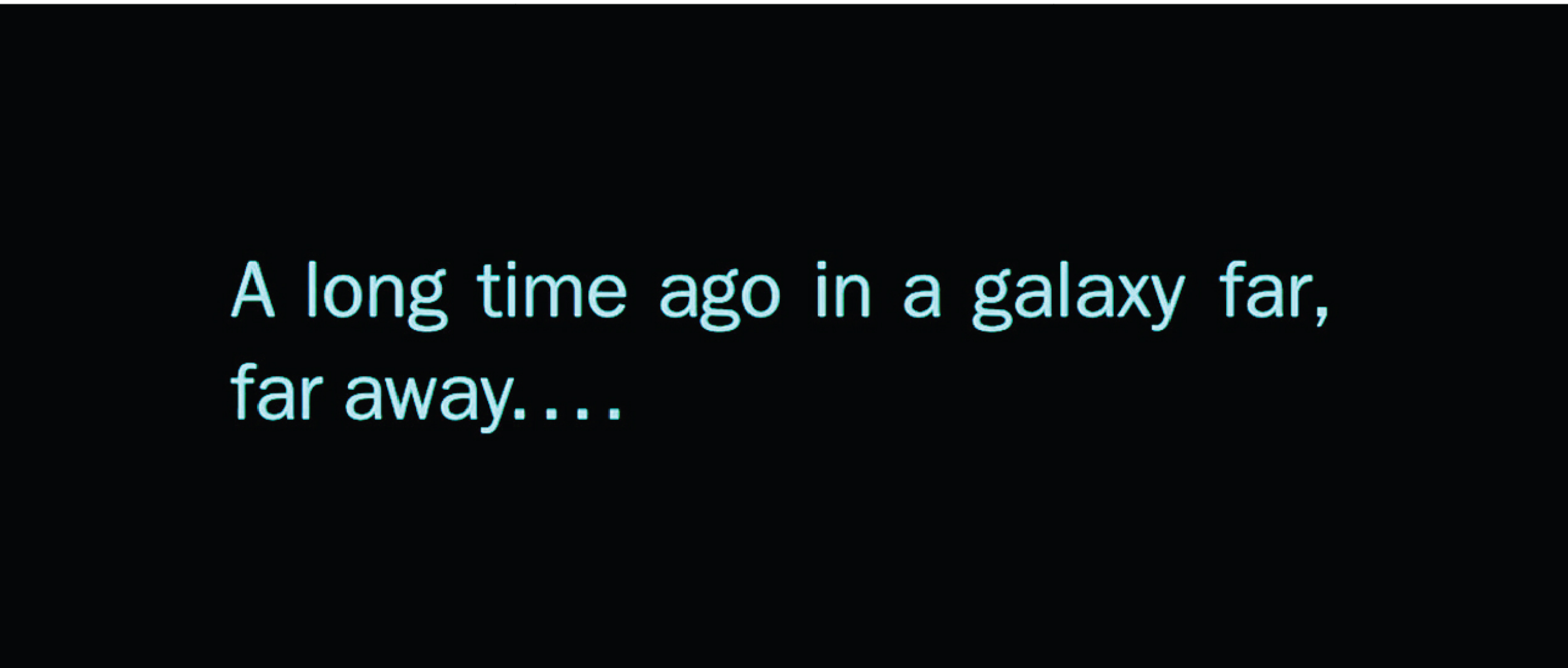
Image opposite above: Photograph, a model maker at work on an *Imperial Star Destroyer* model from Peterson x.

Images opposite below and below: Cinematic stills from the beginning of *Star Wars: Episode IV*.

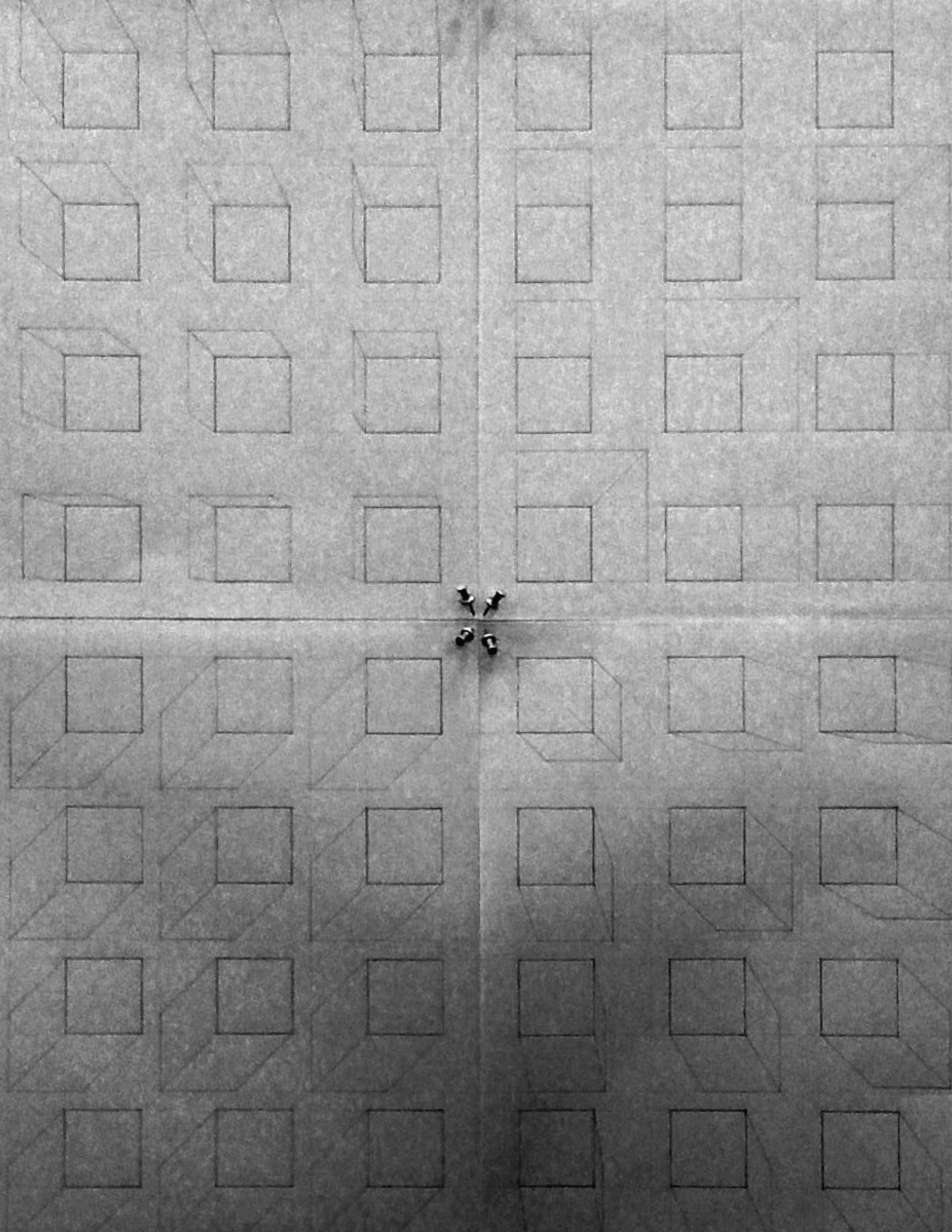
George Lucas, *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1999).

George Lucas, *Star Wars (Episode IV: A New Hope)* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1977).

Lorne Peterson, *Sculpting a Galaxy: Inside the Star Wars Model Shop* (San Rafael, CA: Insight Editions, 2006).



A long time ago in a galaxy far,
far away….



PRECEDENT SYNTAX AND TECHNIQUE EXPERIMENTATION

Part of the research phase is the search for an appropriate means of representation, for a fitting method of syntactic structure to put towards the embodiment of the project's semantics. As is to be briefly discussed in Part C, the issue of finding a proper means towards a desired end is a weighty and oftentimes arbitrary decision. In the project of *Isotopia*, the problem of locating this starting point was not taken lightly, yet in the end the decision turned out to be easier — or perhaps more straightforward than was initially expected.

The following brief interlude is a small insight into the experimental phases in the search for a means to a desired end. The investigation was initiated in the realm of two-dimensional representations selected, from selected precedents of Art and Architectural Discourse that provoked a certain inexplicable stimulation. Human nature seems to dictate that we are captivated by those things that are hardest to explain. Spatial and perspectival analyses revealed that the inexplicable nature of the representations resulted from a consciously conspicuous deviation from conventional spatial configurations. This resulted in a representational experiment [depicted opposite and in the following spread] concerning the spatio-visual effects of composite axonometric and perspectival drawings. At this point a shift in interest occurred towards the potential for physical three-dimensional artifacts to confound conventional spatial, physical, and structural expectations, concretizing these kinds of principles and acting to embody other esoteric and mysterious ideas. [See the third spread.]

Image opposite, and following spread: *Experiment in Perspectival Axonometric and the Spatiality of the Alternative and the Unreal*, by the author (2012). Orthographic hand drawing, graphite on vellum, 34 x 34 in square; CAD diagram.

Following second spread: *Precedent Studies*, by the author, with accompanying precedent images;
[above left] El Lissitzky, *Proun 23, No.6* painting (1919) from Lissitzky-Küppers plate 23;
[above right] Rem Koolhaas et al., *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, The Park of Aggression* axonometric rendering (1972) from Schaik 250; [below left] Victor Vasarely, *Vega 200* painting (1968) from Holzhey 72;
[below right] Raimund Abraham, *Last House* rendering (1979-'80) from Abraham *[Un]built* 108, Ungebaut 39.

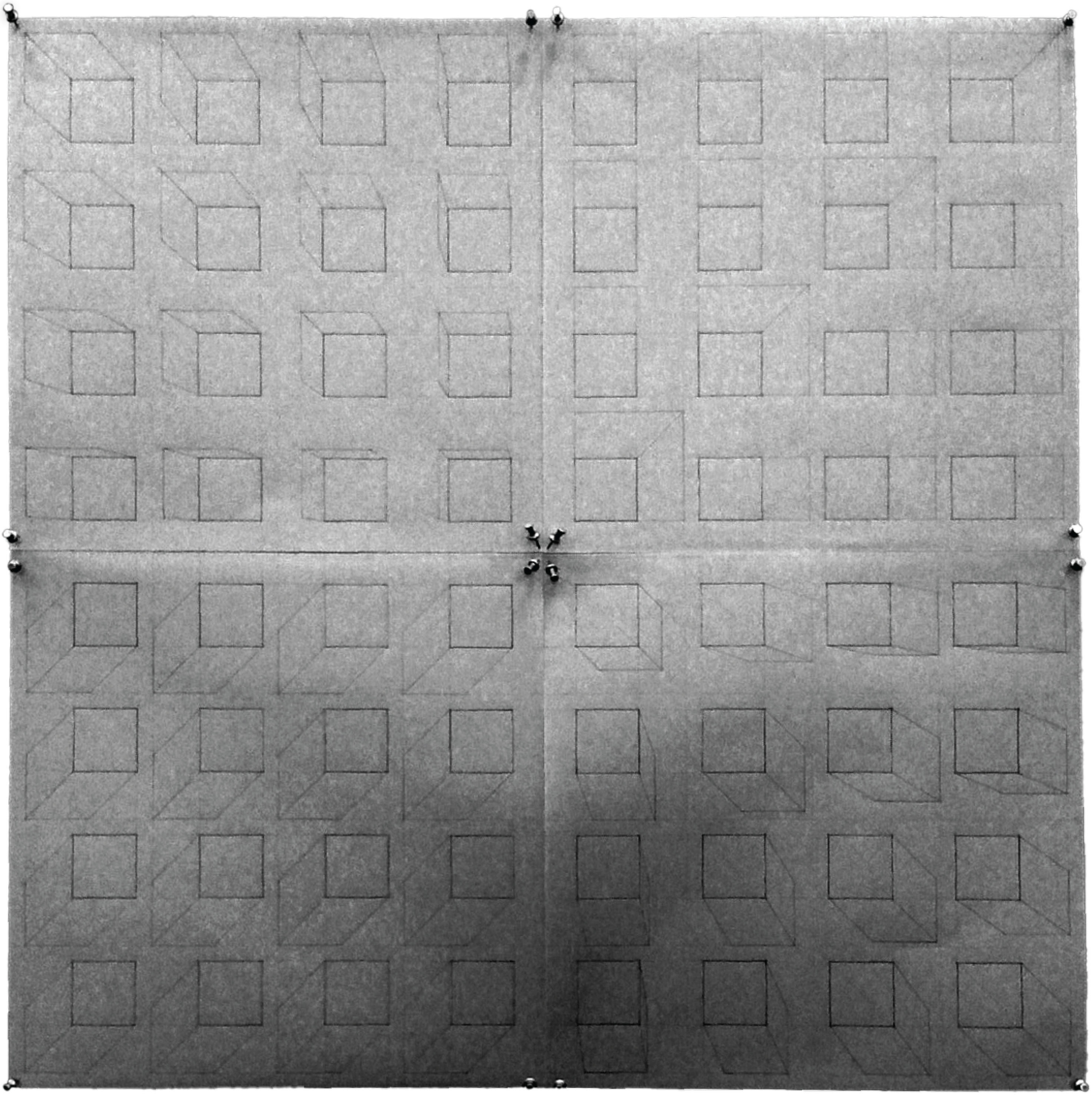
Raimund Abraham, *[Un]built* (New York, NY: Springer/Verlag, 1996).

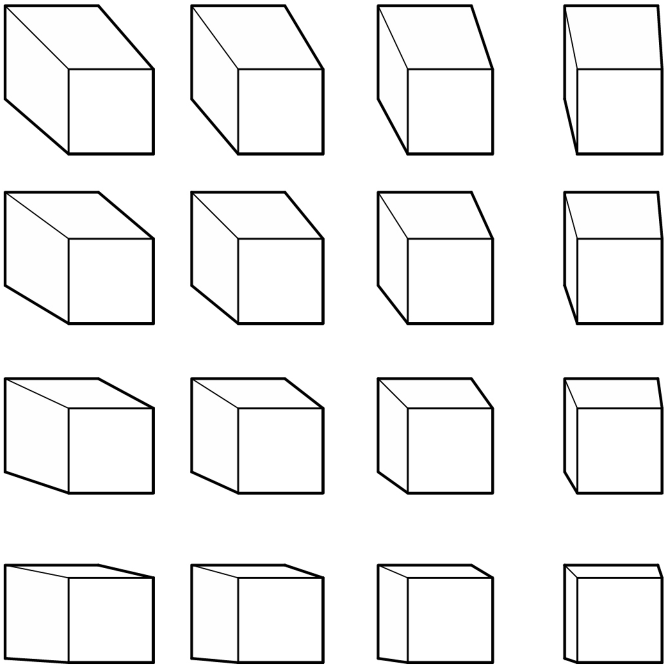
Raimund Abraham, *Ungebaut/Unbuilt* (Bozen, Innsbruck: Galerie Museum, Galerie Krinzinger: 1986).

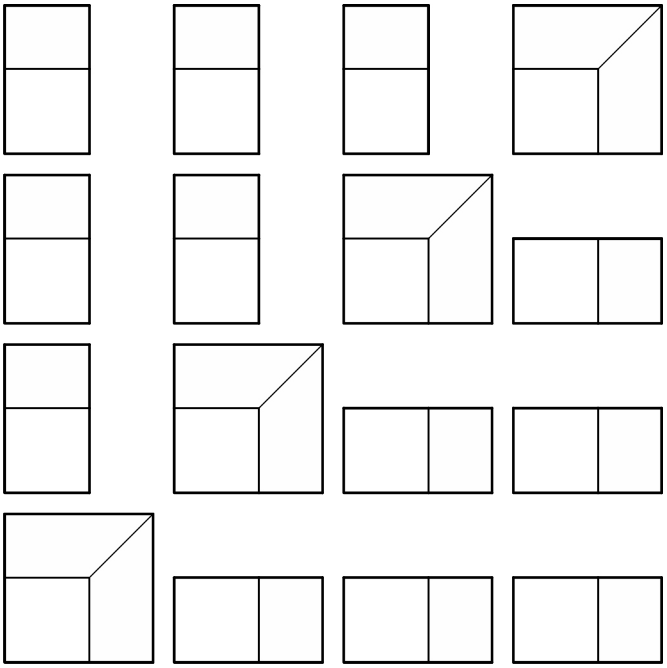
Magdalena Holzhey, *Victor Vasarely: Pure Vision* (Germany: Taschen, 2005).

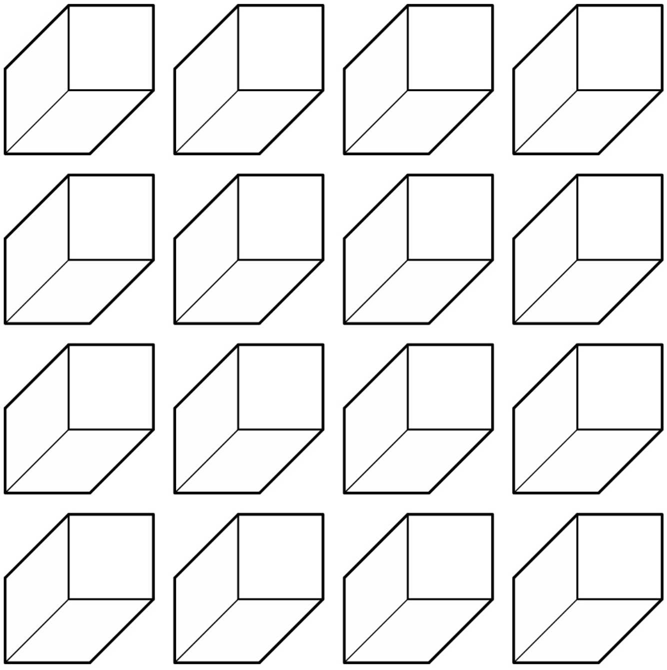
Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1968).

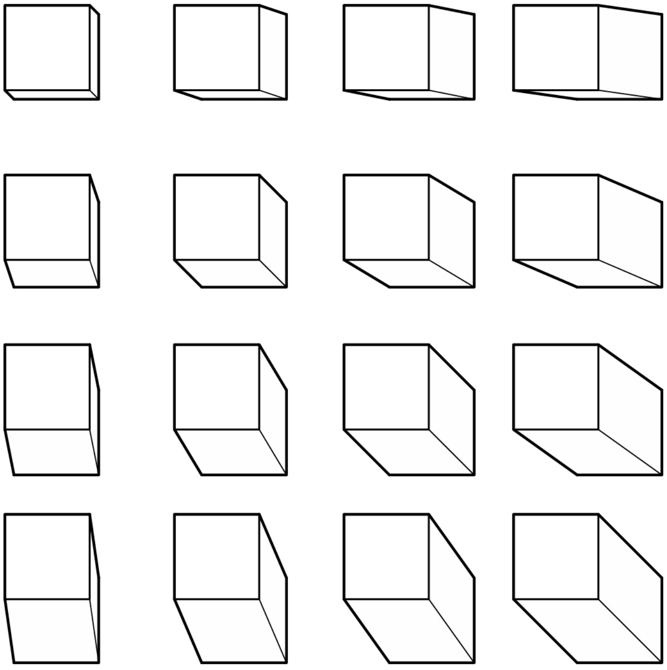
Martin van Schaik and Otakar Macel [ed.], *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations 1956-'76* (New York, NY: Prestel Publishing, 2005).

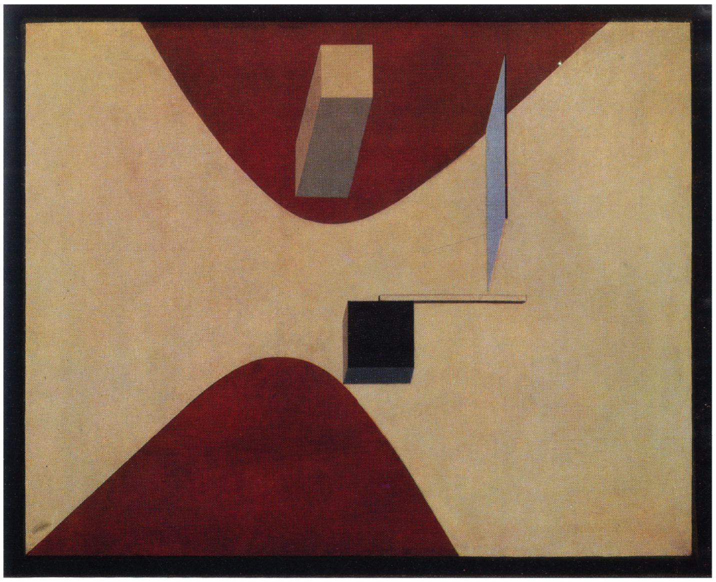


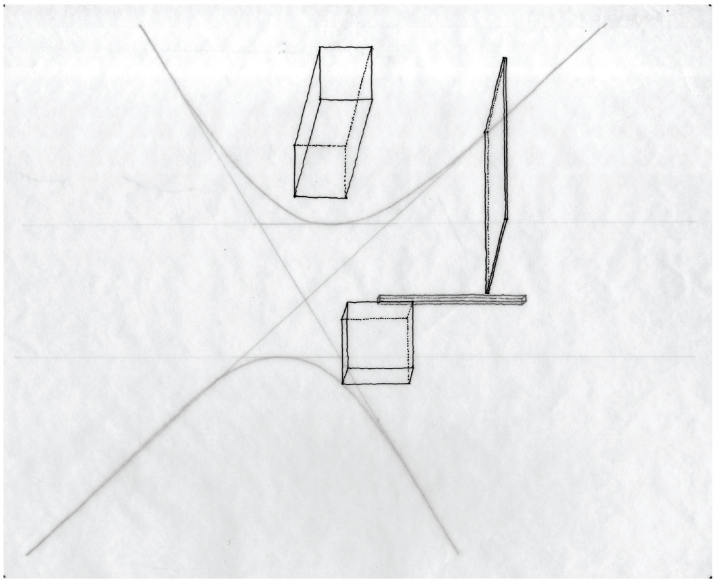




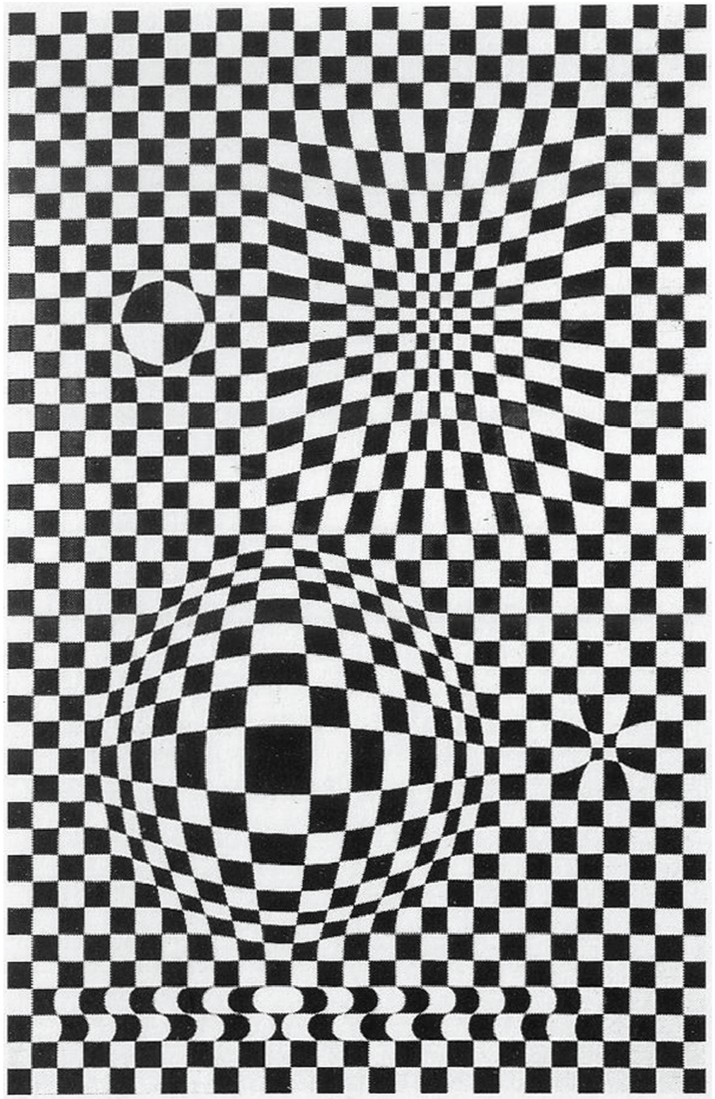


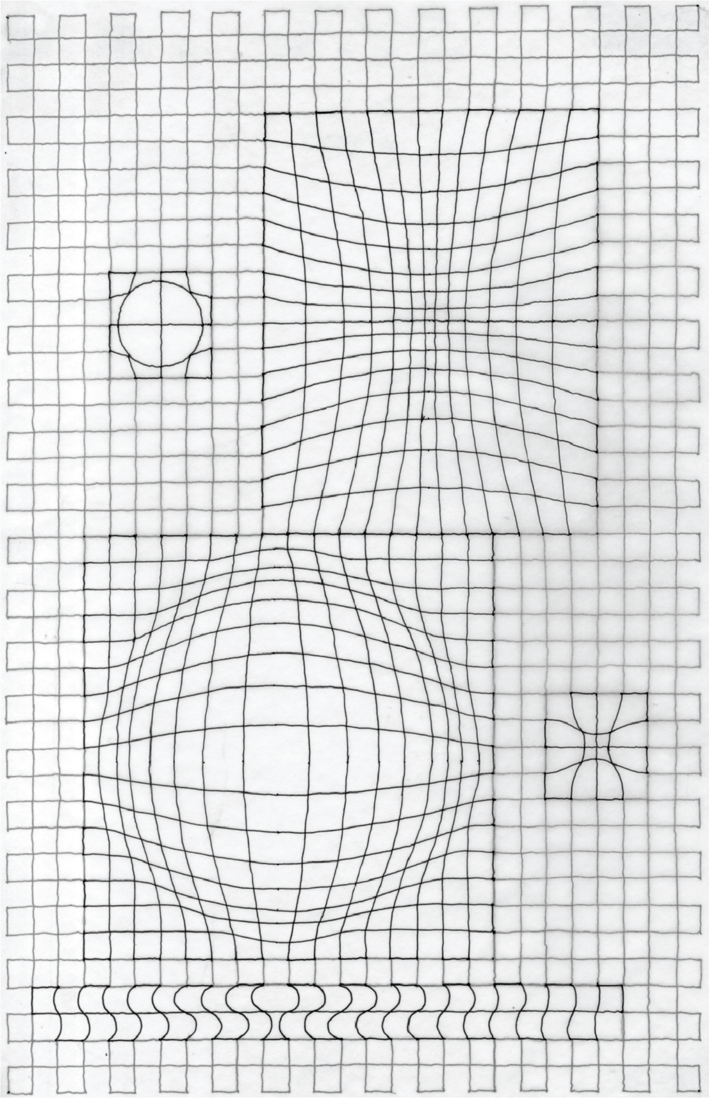




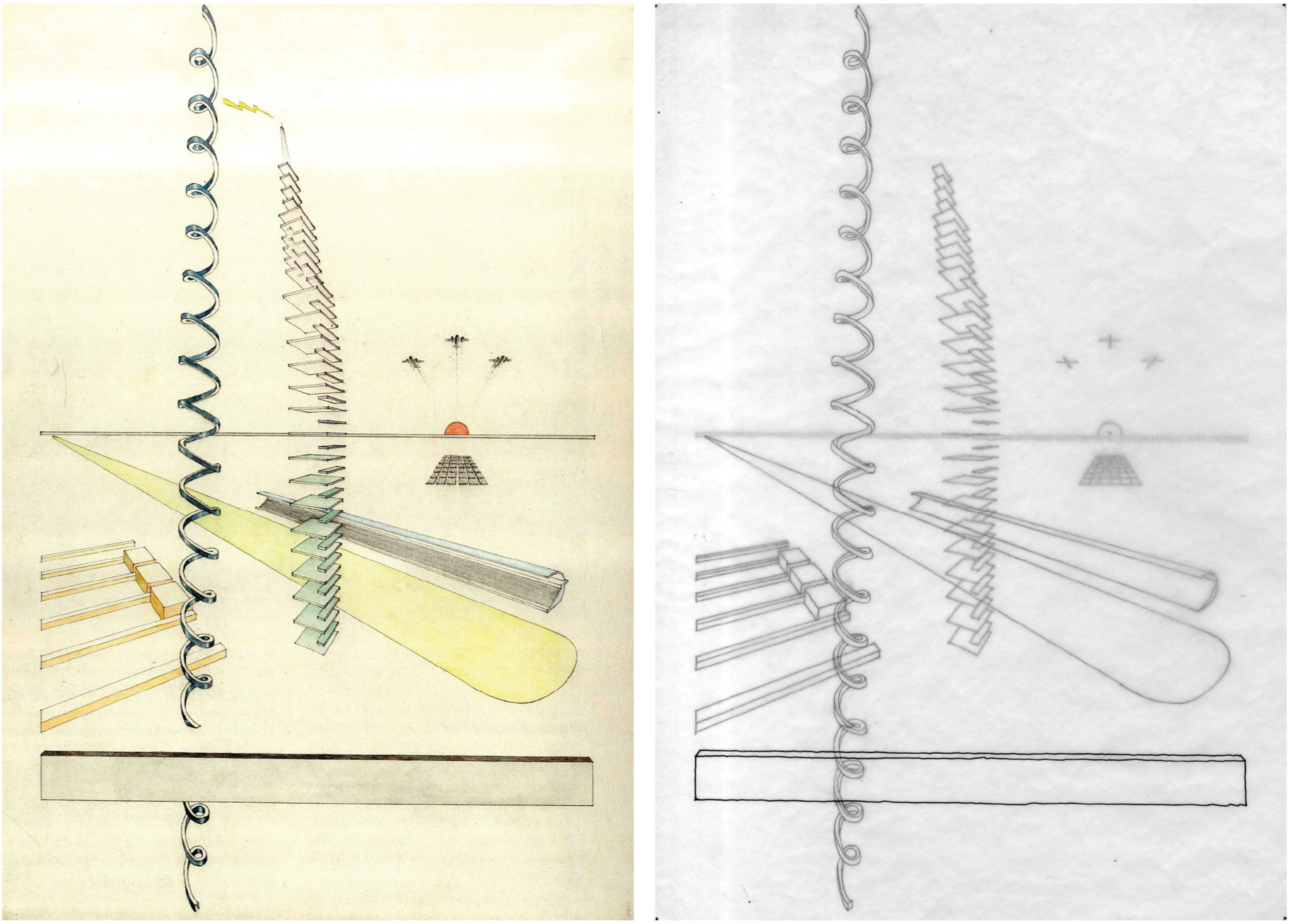


El Lissitzky, *Proun 23, No.6* (1919)
Oil on canvas, 77 x 52 cm landscape. Collection of N. Esterick, London.

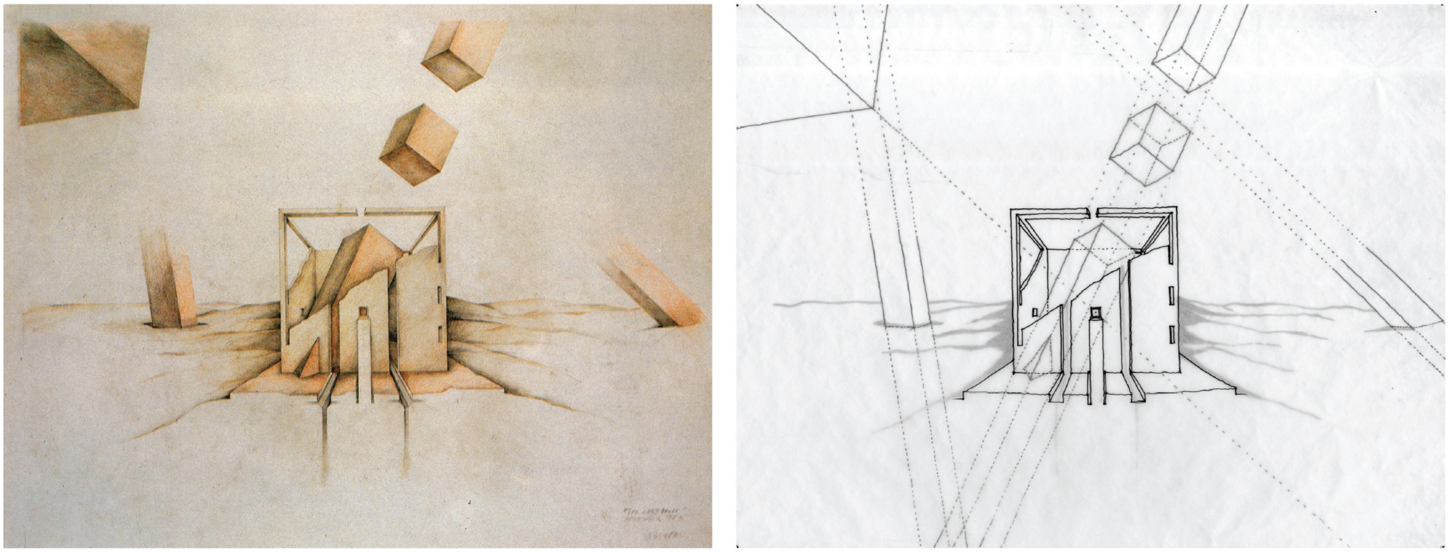




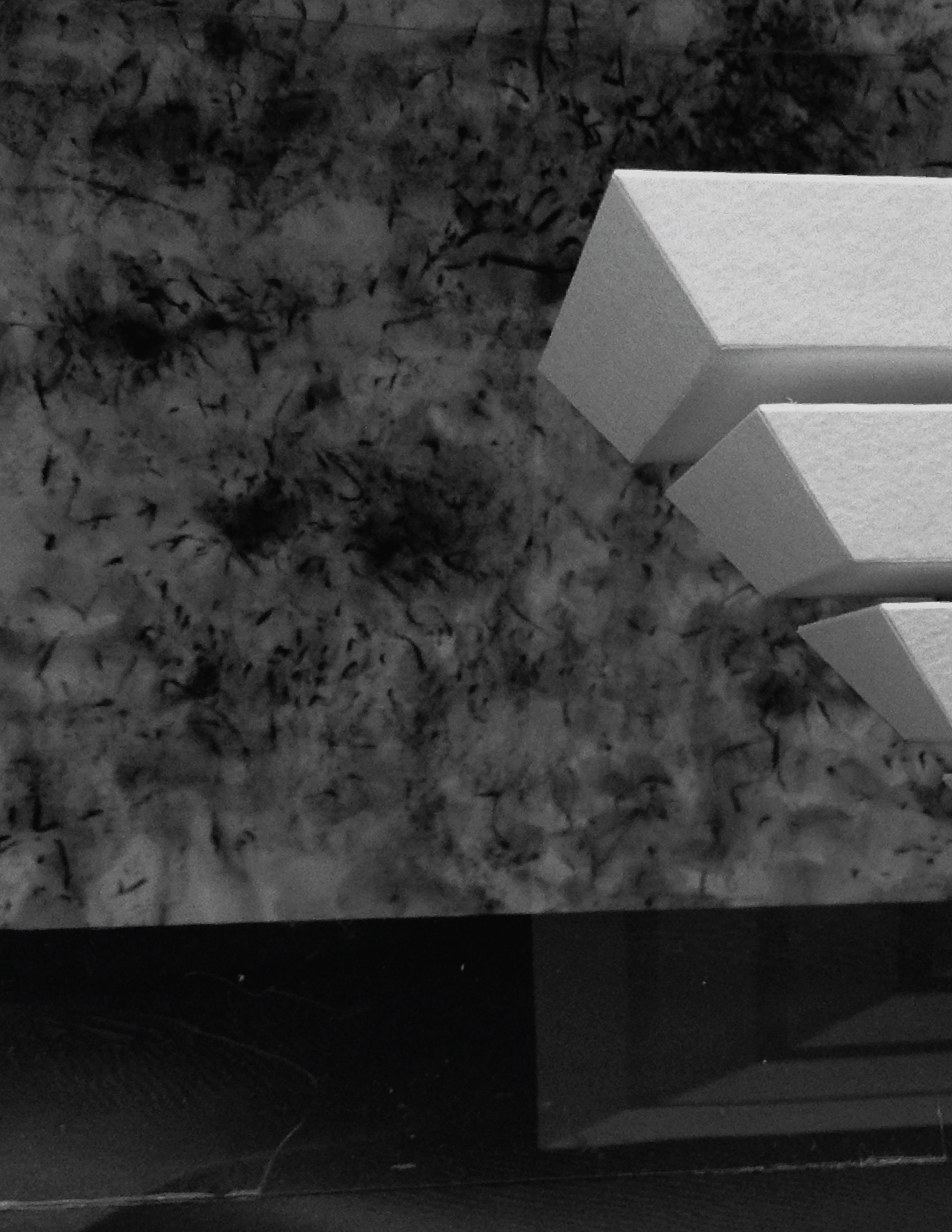
Victor Vasarely, *Vega* (1957)
Acrylic on canvas, 47 x 33 cm portrait. Private collection.

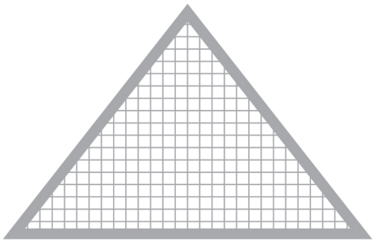


Rem Koolhaas et al., *Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture, The Park of Aggression* (1972)
Graphite and watercolor on paper, 42 x 29 cm portrait. Museum of Modern Art, New York.

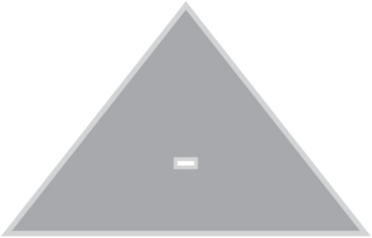


Raimund Abraham, *Last House* (1984)
Graphite and colored pencils on paper. Location unknown.

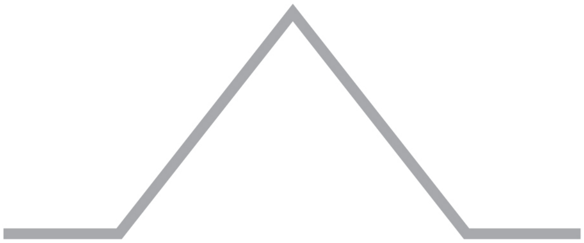




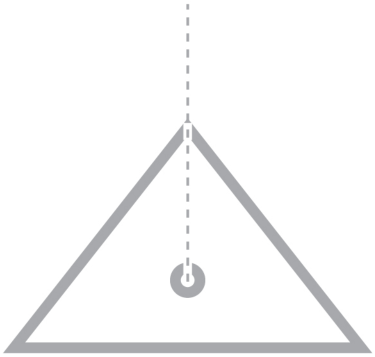
1. *Monumental Construction*



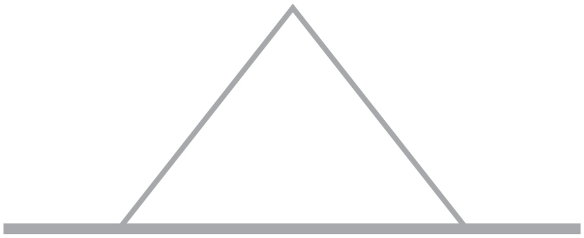
4. *Burial Chamber*



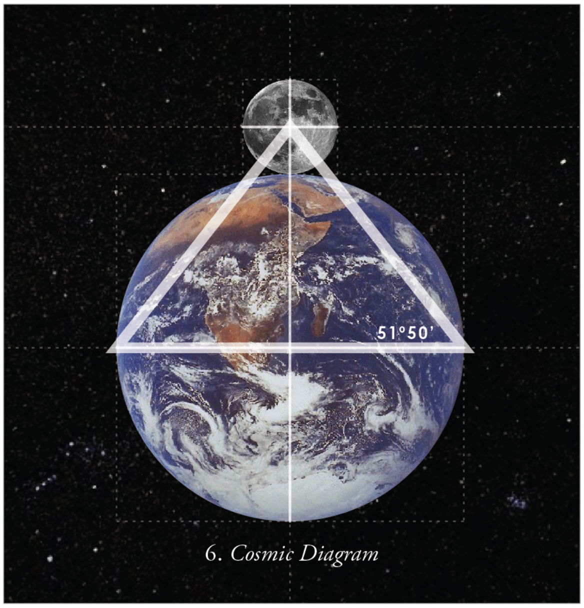
2. *Human-Made Landscape*



5. *Divine Instrument*



3. *Ritual Sanctuary*



6. *Cosmic Diagram*

PRECEDENT SYNTAX AND TECHNIQUE EXPERIMENTATION (Cont'd)

To reiterate, this thesis understands **architecture** as the **purposeful and calculated concretization of ideas and beliefs**: functional, technical, conceptual, programmatic, social, cultural, political, religious, spiritual, existential, metaphysical, etc. As a simple platonic form made of a singular material, the *Great Pyramid of Khufu* still stands as the last remaining structure of the seven wonders of the ancient world, from 2560 BCE. Its greatness is not only a result of the edifice's durable nature, but also the multifaceted breadth and depth of meaning and purpose which the monument embodies through its fairly simple and straightforward geometric form, scale, and structure. In a single platonic volume, the culture of the Ancient Egyptians managed to embed an enormous amount of complexity:

1. *Monumental Construction*: exhibition of technical ability
2. *Human-Made Landscape*: symbol of Human dominion over Earth
3. *Ritual Sanctuary*: site of holy ceremony
4. *Burial Chamber*: object of perpetual fortification
5. *Divine Instrument*: apparatus for heavenly ascension
6. *Cosmic Diagram*: artifact of astrological awareness

Preceding spread: *Metaphysical Archaeology* model experiment, by the author (2012).

Images opposite: *Metaphysical Archaeology* diagrams of the *Great Pyramid of Khufu*, by the author (2012).

SITUATING THE PROJECT WITHIN AN ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

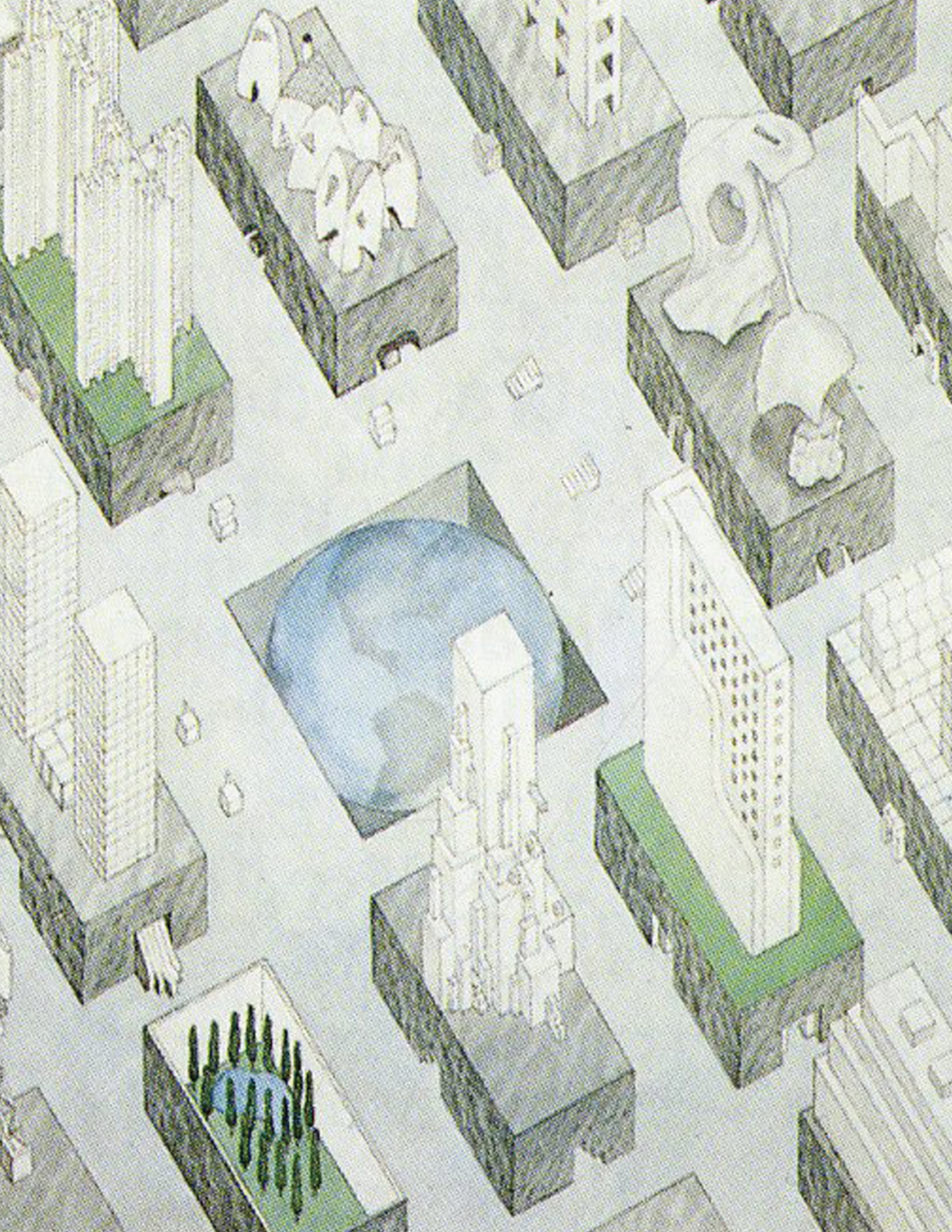
Pulling the curtain further back, this section provides documentation, speculation, explanation, insight, validation, verification, and rationalization, for certain decisions undergone, specific procedures followed, and important experiences undergone over the course of the architectural project.

Process Steps* [as documented in "Situating the Project Relative to the *Artifact*"]:

- *Sketch* concept and general geometry [pencil on sketch paper]
- *Draft* base shapes and planes [AutoCAD]
- *Assemble* 3D composition, *configure* irregular shapes and planes, *unroll* developable surfaces [Rhino]
- *Highlight* scoring orientations, outwards or inwards [pencil on sketch paper]
- *Draft* final templates [AutoCAD]
- *Layout*, *lineweight*, and *print* templates [Adobe Illustrator, Acrobat, plotter]
- *Mount* templates on material [spray mount on 140# paper]
- *Cut* and *score* the material with templates [blade and ruler on cutting mat]
- *Fold* and *glue* the material while removing templates [tacky glue]
- *Evaluate* artifact outcome, and *revise* design and/or construction if necessary or appropriate [hands and eyes]

*The tools, techniques, and order of operations are a product of previous experimentation, accumulated experience, and personal preference.

Image opposite: Photograph by the author, production in process.



SITUATING THE PROJECT RELATIVE TO A SITE

As a site, the island of Manhattan can be understood as a rapidly evolving Petri dish of civilized Humanity; a litmus test for the contemporary Human relationship with Earth, via the mediation of the built environment. In his 1972 Manhattan allegory *City of the Captive Globe*, Koolhaas foresees that "the changes in this ideological skyline will be rapid and continuous: a rich spectacle of ethical joy, moral fever, or intellectual masturbation." (Koolhaas *Delirious New York* 294). Extending this statement to its logical conclusion, *Isotopia* envisions the scenario of the island of Manhattan in an undefined and unidentified time in the future, in a period extinct of physical life, when a select few buildings remain standing.

The artifact of the island is constructed at **1:7200 scale**, so that **1" = 600'**, and the scale of the island can be archaeologically examined with the understanding that one inch and one half of the model is equal to the length of the average street block in contemporary Manhattan, from center-of-avenue to center-of-avenue. *Isotopia* carries the ever-increasing trend of scalar insensitivity in urban-building production to its hyperbolized and logical conclusion: *Meta-Large* obtuseness, absurdity, and severity.

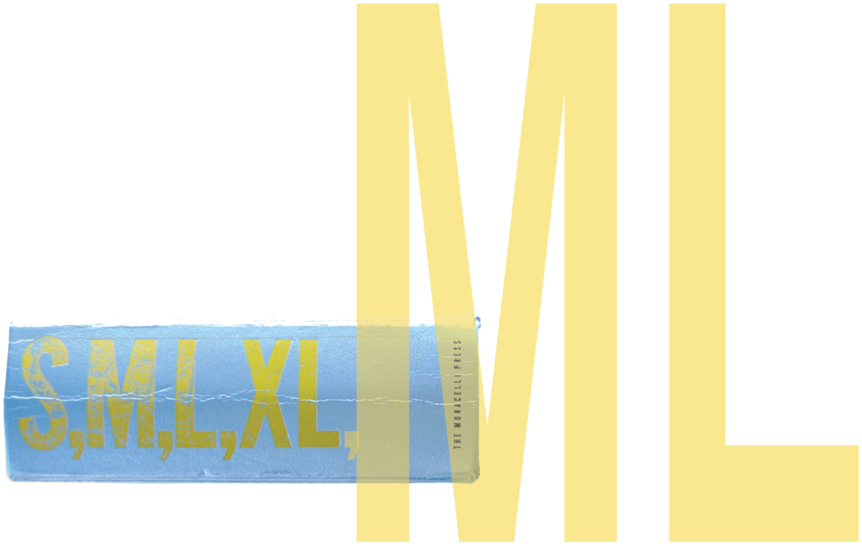
Image opposite: Rem Koolhaas et al., *City of the Captive Globe* axonometric rendering (1972) from Koolhaas *Delirious New York* 295.

Image below: *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large, Meta-Large* concept diagram, by the author.

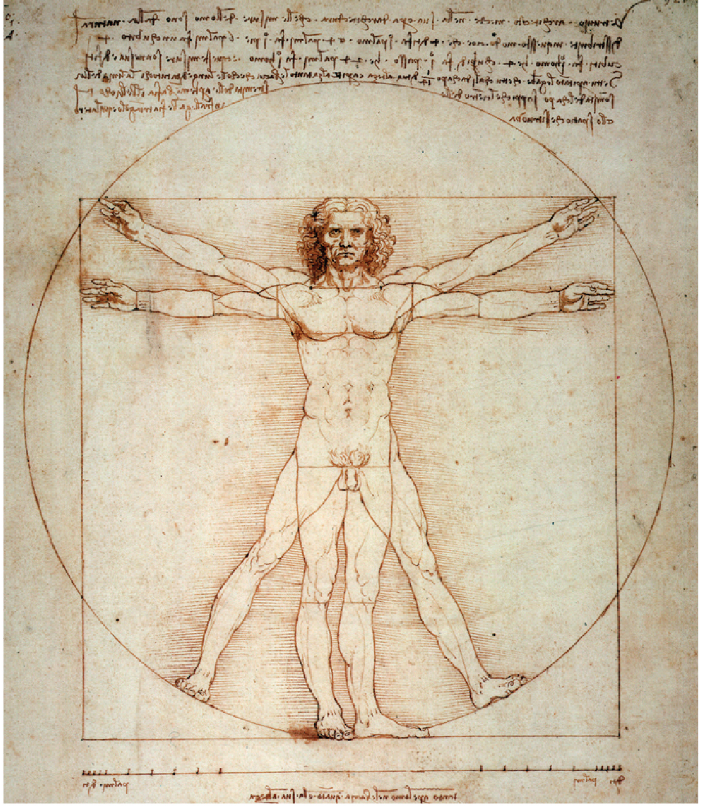
Following spread: Photograph by the author, aerial view of New York from helicopter.

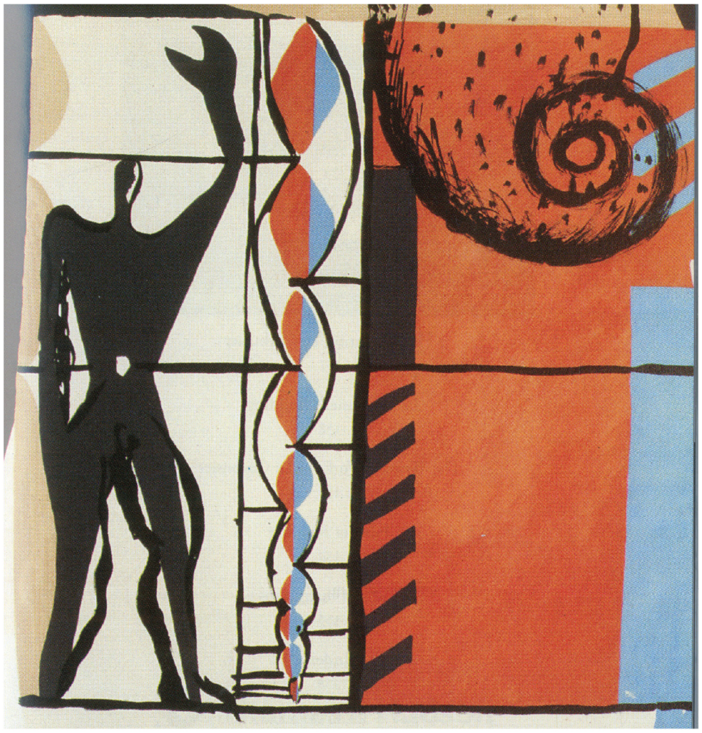
Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1994, originally 1978).

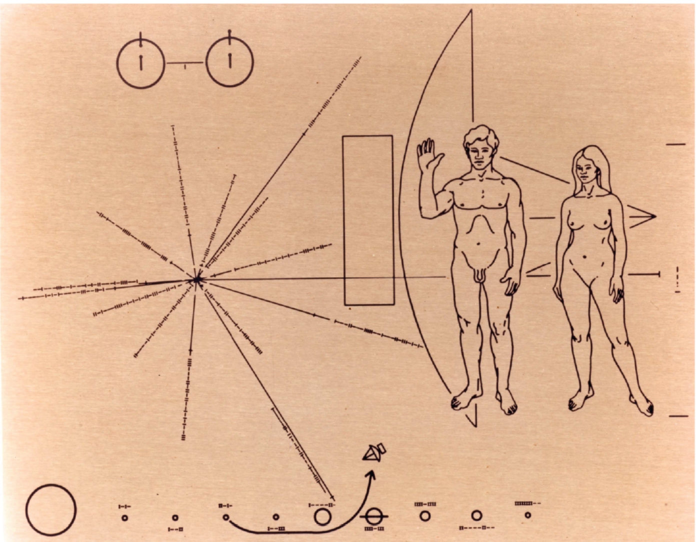
Rem Koolhaas [and Bruce Mau], *Small, Medium, Large, Extra-Large* (New York, NY: Monacelli Press, 1995).



SMALL, MEDIUM, LARGE, EXTRA-LARGE, META-LARGE







SITUATING THE PROJECT RELATIVE TO HUMAN BEINGS

To restate: *Isotopia* represents an architectural cemetery within the context of a posthuman future. The individual buildings act as different figural "characters" or "personalities" whose programmatic functions are analogized with various organs and parts of the Human Body. These individual programmatic characters perform as indexical symbols for the biological features and functions that they embody, concretized as both monuments to Humanity and as memorials to its corporeal existence, and reminiscent of Dali's *Archaeological Reminiscence*. [See the following spread.]

This interest in the Human figure follows a lineage of utopian and futurist thinking, from da Vinci to Le Corbusier to Carl Sagan. From the Enlightenment to Modernity, Humans have sought to define and contextualize their bodies relative to some greater scalar or universal order, in pursuit of their own justifications for their being. Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* attempted to validate the Human figure as inline with the mathematical and geometric harmony of Godly order and omniscience. Le Corbusier's *Modulor Man* continued the attempt to ascribe legitimacy to Human existence, establishing the Human Figure as a harmonious object in itself, worthy of imitation, reproduction, and simulation in the built environment. Carl Sagan's *Pioneer Plaque* situated the Human species as an occupant of a specific planet within a specific star system with a specific location relative to other star systems within a greater galactic configuration. The *Plaque* was mounted onboard the *Pioneer 10* and *Pioneer 11* space exploration drones. Working within the belief system that Humans are not alone in the universe and that there exist other sentient beings that would appreciate and respond to this communication, the representation's purpose was to attempt to verify the belief system on which it is based. The same statements can all be said for *Isotopia*.

In terms of the analogy of the Human Body to the city, one might delineate between two schools of thought: Le Corbusier's urban plan for the working city of Chandigarh used the Human Body in analogy to the city with respect to its realistic functions and systems. The project is retrospectively understood to not achieve its intended goals as a functioning and vibrant city. On the other hand, Aldo Rossi's design for the *San Cataldo Cemetery* in Modena uses the Human Body in analogy to the site plan of the project for poetic and polemic reasons within the larger intention of designing not only a city for the dead but also a cemetery for architecture. Under these terms, the Human Body analogy is not only a useful, but also a successful one. In the case of *Isotopia*, the project takes a both-and approach to these attitudes. Finally, from the standpoint of architectural practice, the Human Body analogy provides a potent catalyst for design-invention and production.

Images opposite: [top to bottom] Leonardo da Vinci, *Vitruvian Man* drawing (c.1490) from Barrow 254; Le Corbusier, *Modulor* painting (c.1927) from Jenger plates; Carl Sagan et al., *Pioneer Plaque* engraving (1972) from Barrow 180.

Following spread: Salvador Dali, *Archaeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus* painting (1935) from Descharnes 191.

Following second spread: [above] Le Corbusier, *Chandigarh Master Plan* rendering (1952) from Khan 15;
[below] Aldo Rossi, *San Cataldo Cemetery* site plan drawing (c.1976) from Rossi 61.

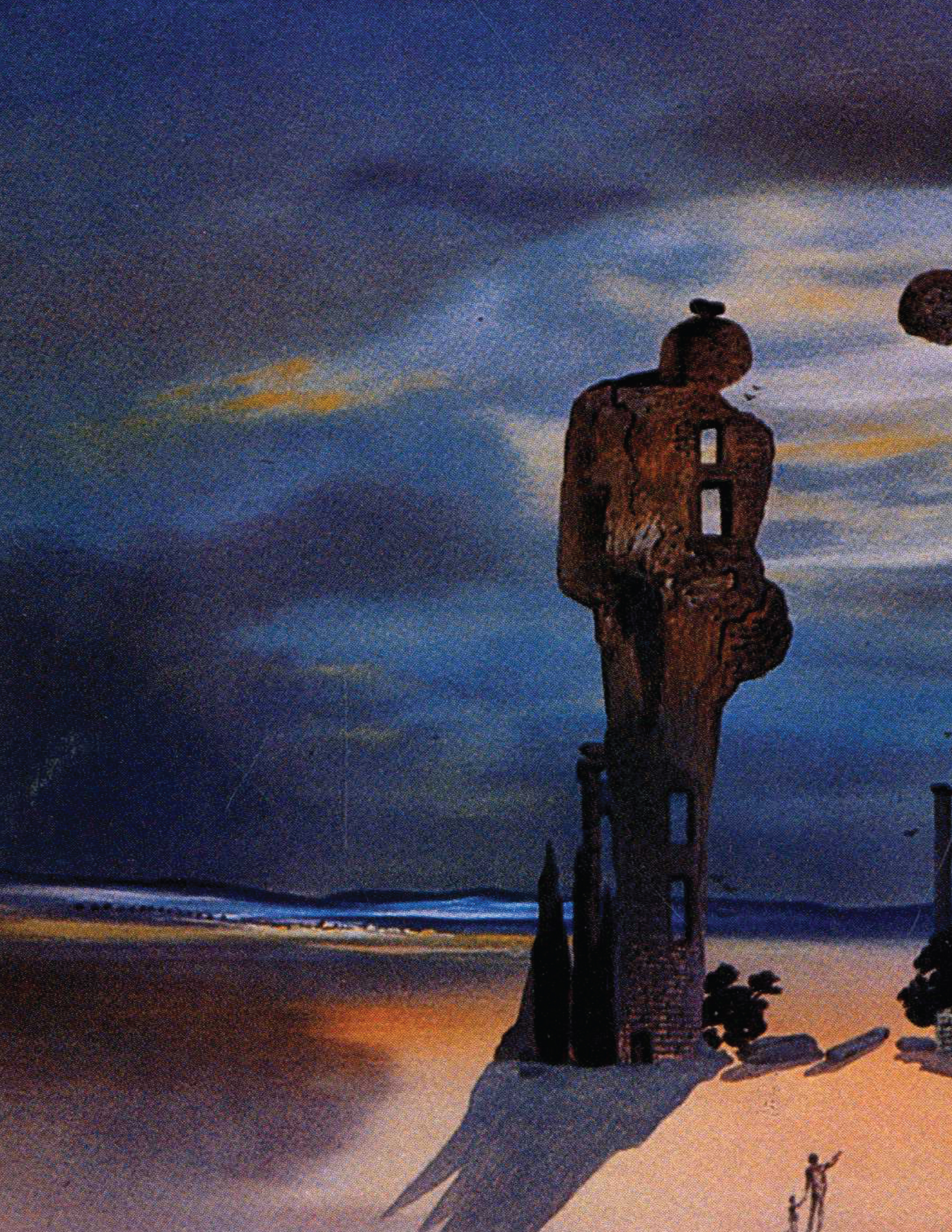
John D. Barrow, *Cosmic Imagery: Key Images in the History of Science* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 2008).

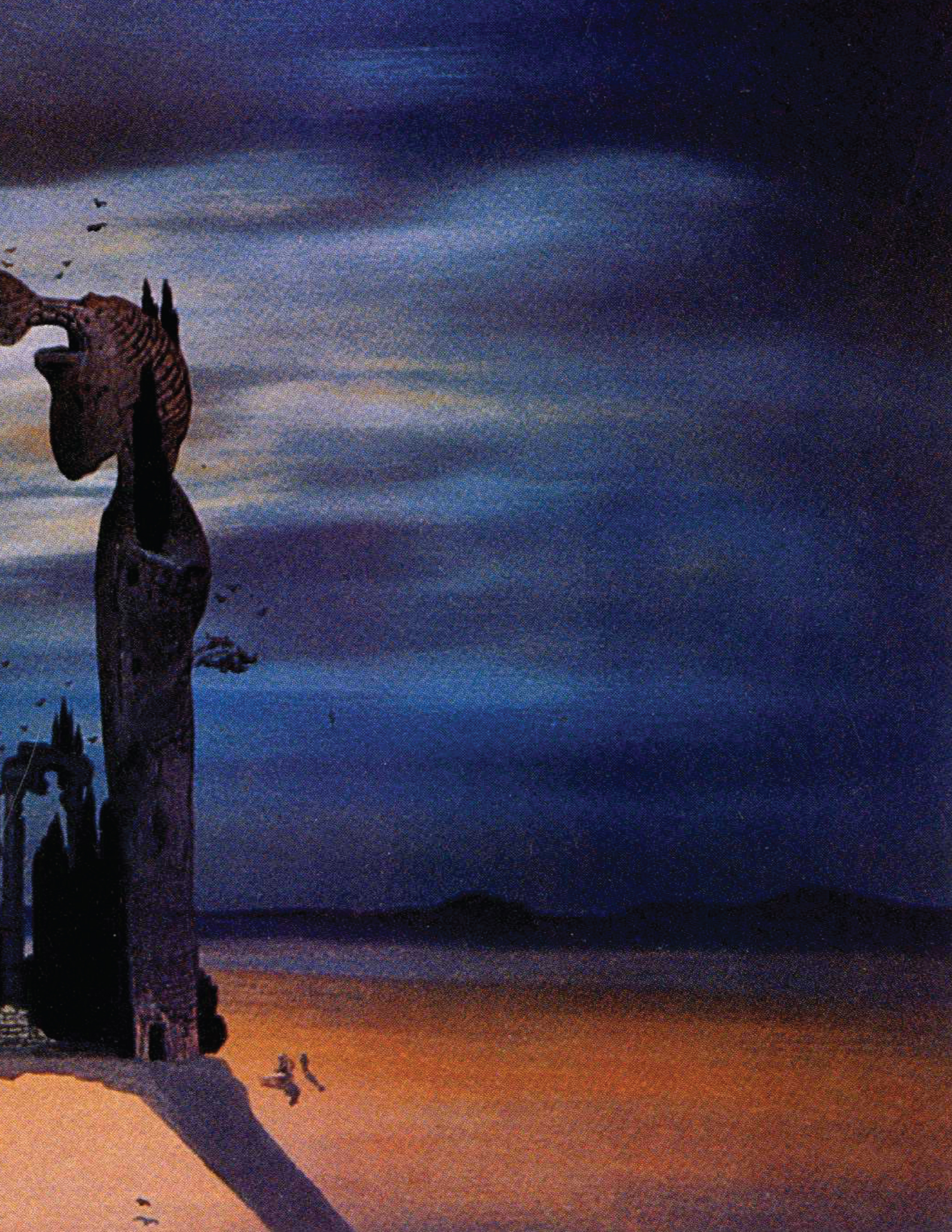
Robert Descharnes, *Salvador Dali: The Work The Man* (Milan: Abradale Press, 1984).

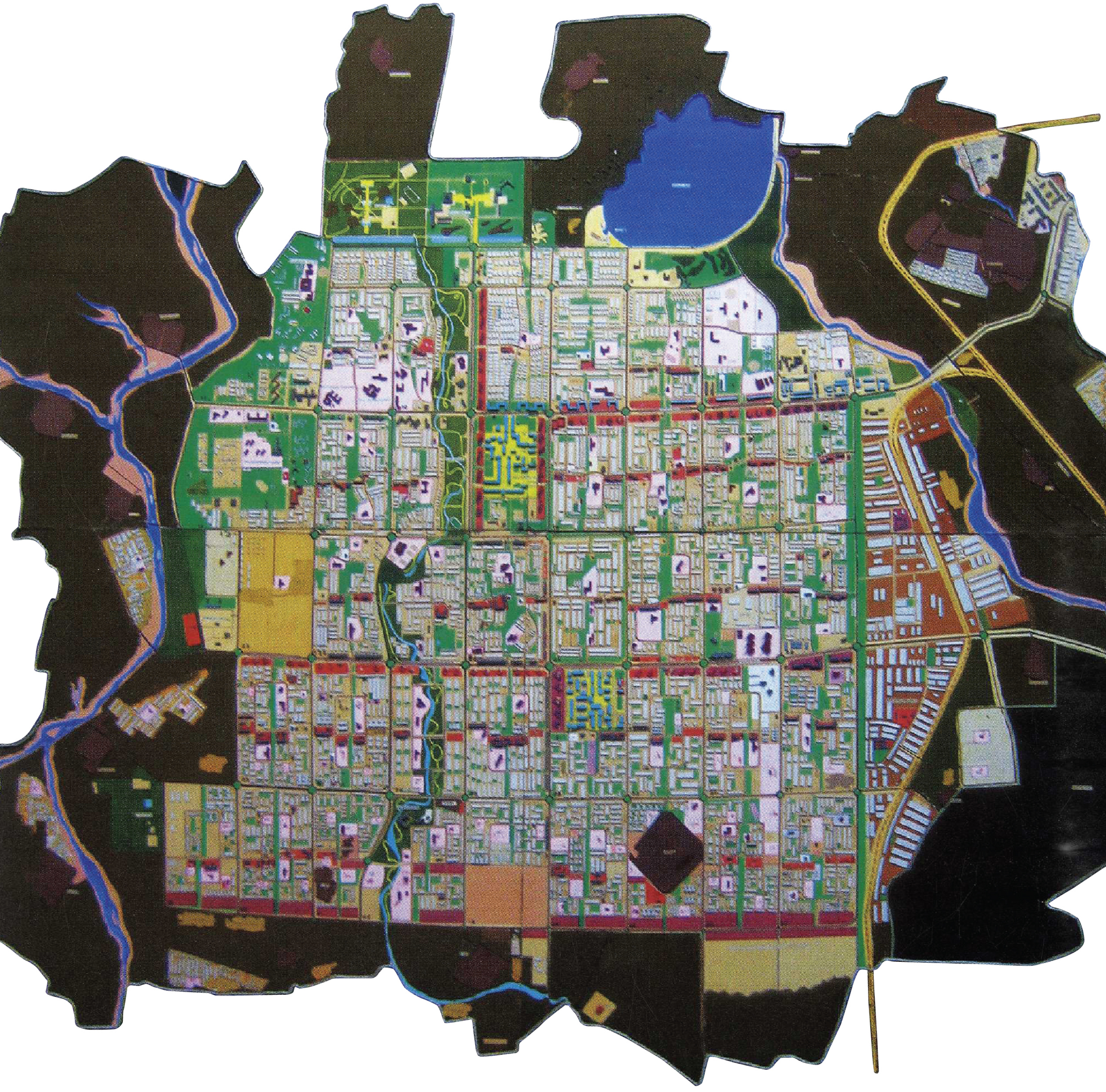
Jean Jenger, *Le Corbusier: Architect of a New Age* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996).

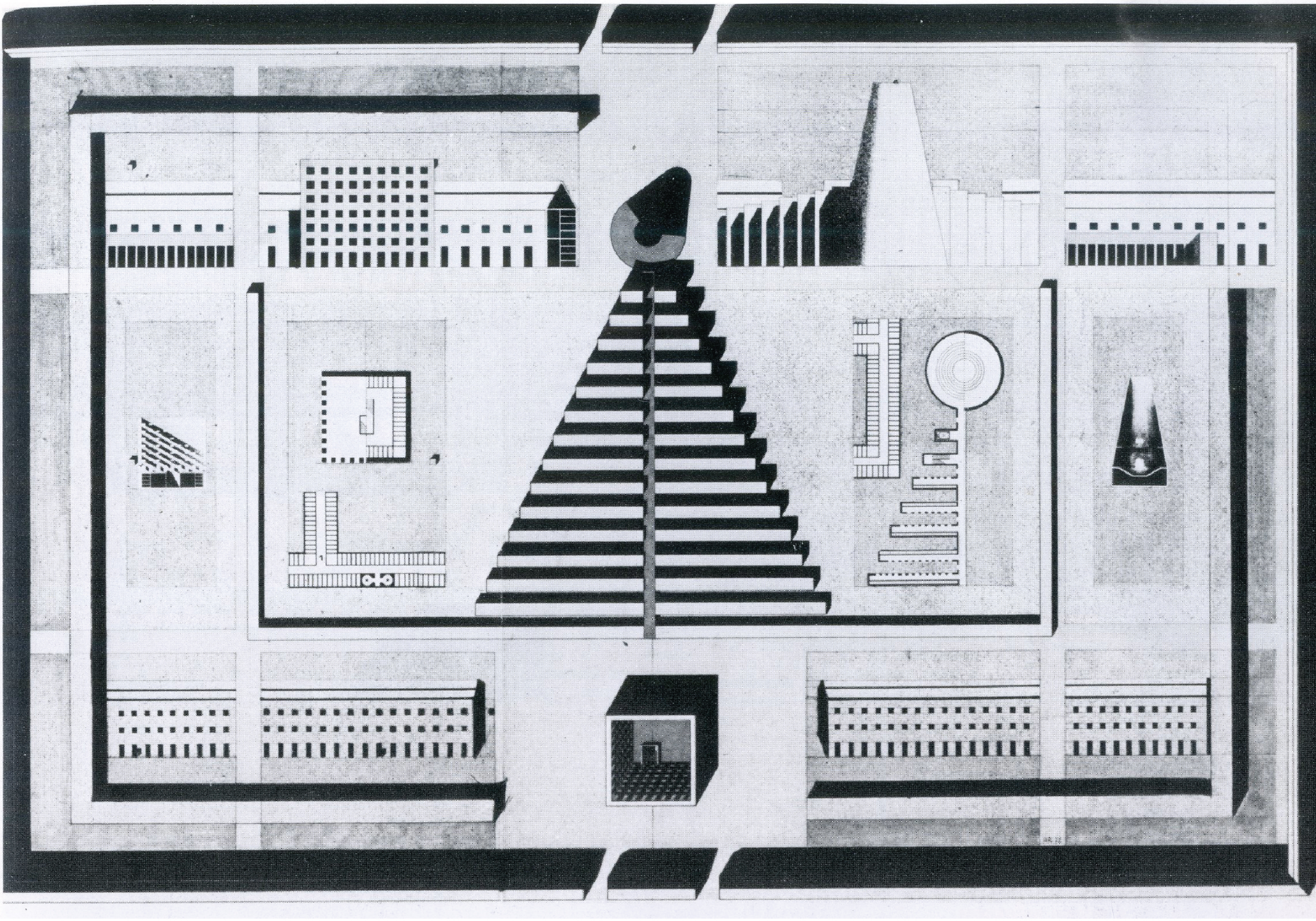
Hasan-Uddin Khan et al., *Le Corbusier: Chandigarh and the Modern City* (Ocean Township, NJ: Grantha, 2009).

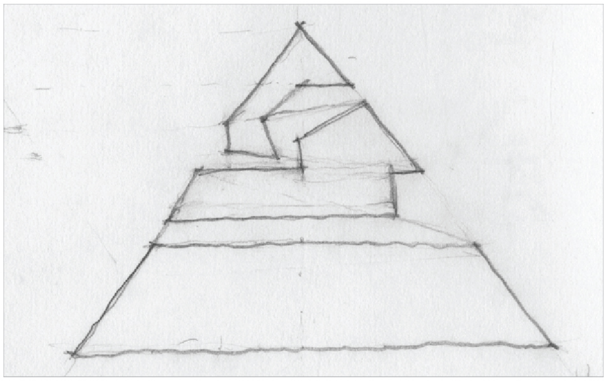
Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Progetti e Disegni 1962-1979* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1979).

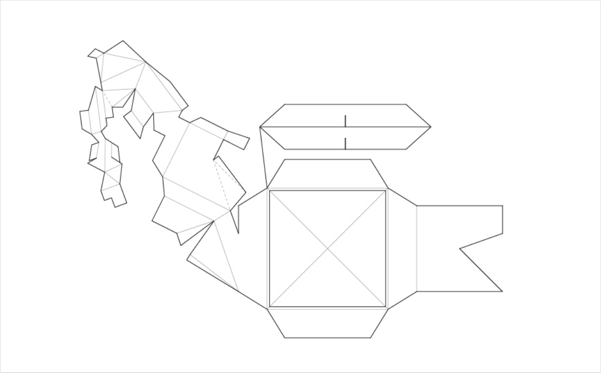


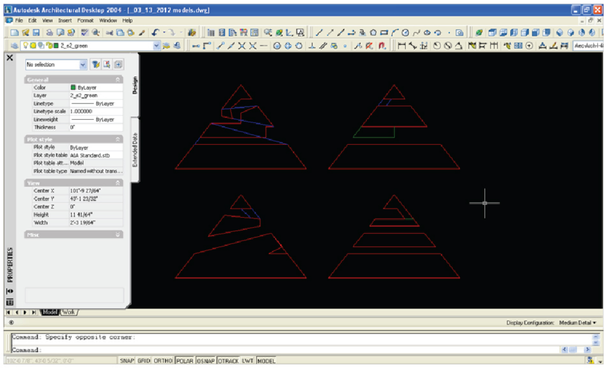












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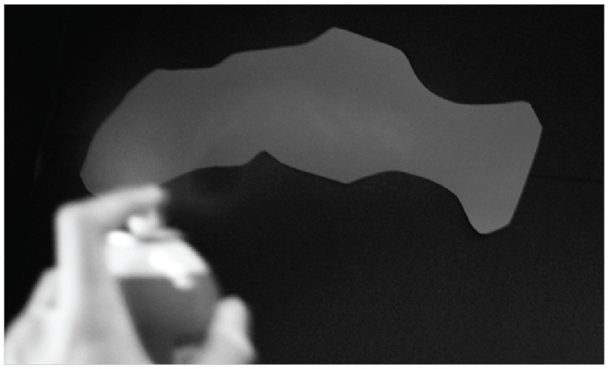

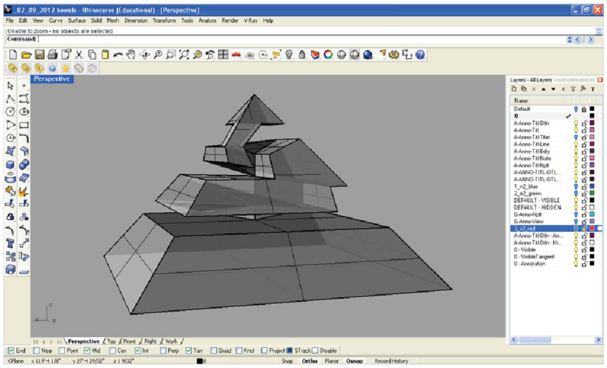

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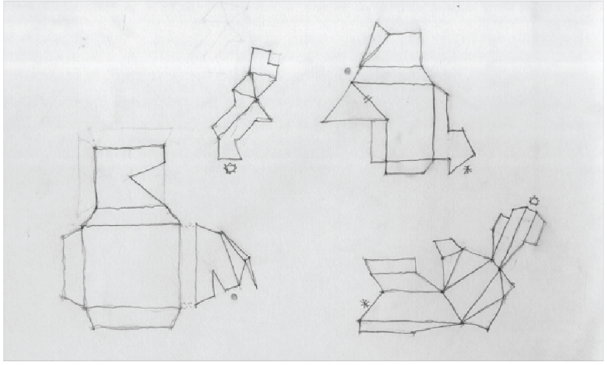

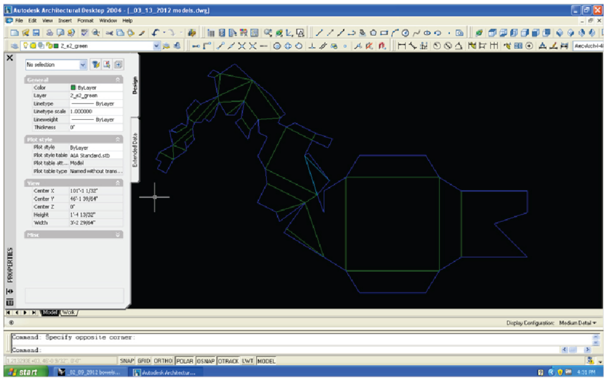

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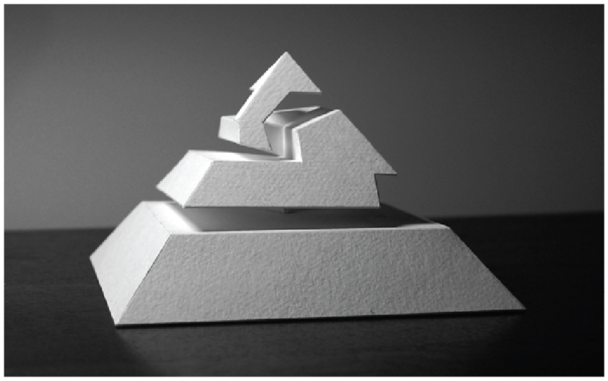


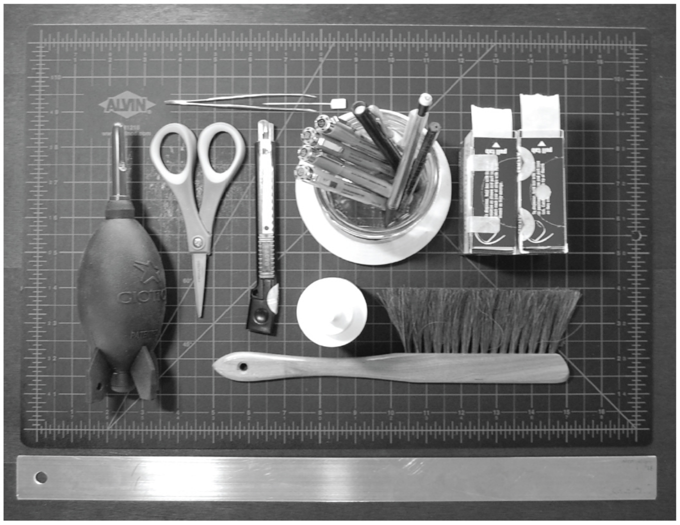
SITUATING THE PROJECT RELATIVE TO THE ARTIFACT

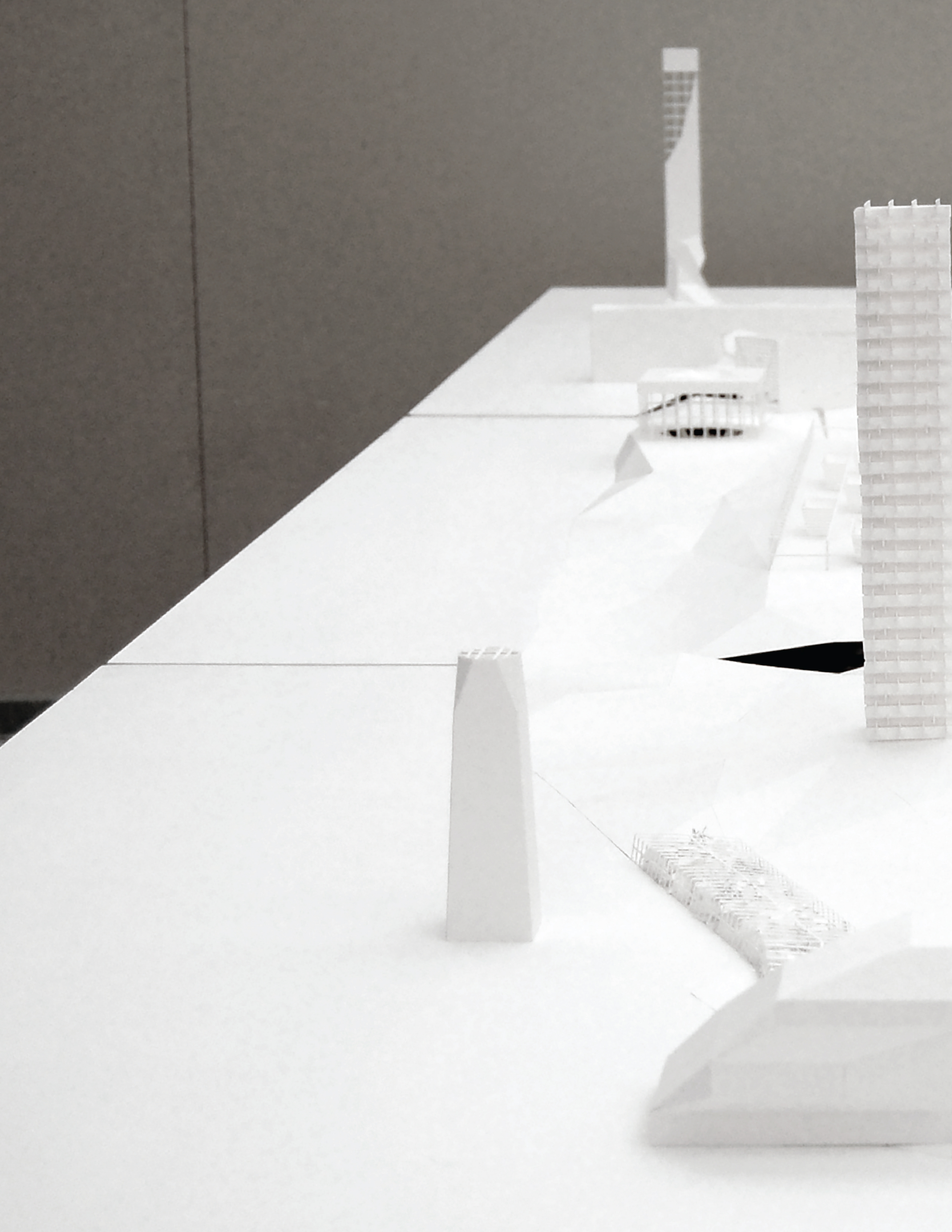
The process of design creation is dictated by the mind-to-hand translation of concept-to-material. The choice of material is equally beholden to both the desires of the mind and the abilities of the hand. [Tangentially, see Descartes, Seventeenth Century CE, and the Bhagavad Gita of the Mahabharata, circa 200 BCE] If a design project were to be consumed by a need to find the most proper and adequate means of generating and representing its end purpose, these means would in fact become the end purpose in itself. If architectural practice were to be consumed by this dichotomy, the practice would inevitably be stunted, beholden to formula and convention. It is for this reason that every project must choose to start somewhere. The project of *Isotopia* is founded on the technique of physical modeling with an abstract and simple material.

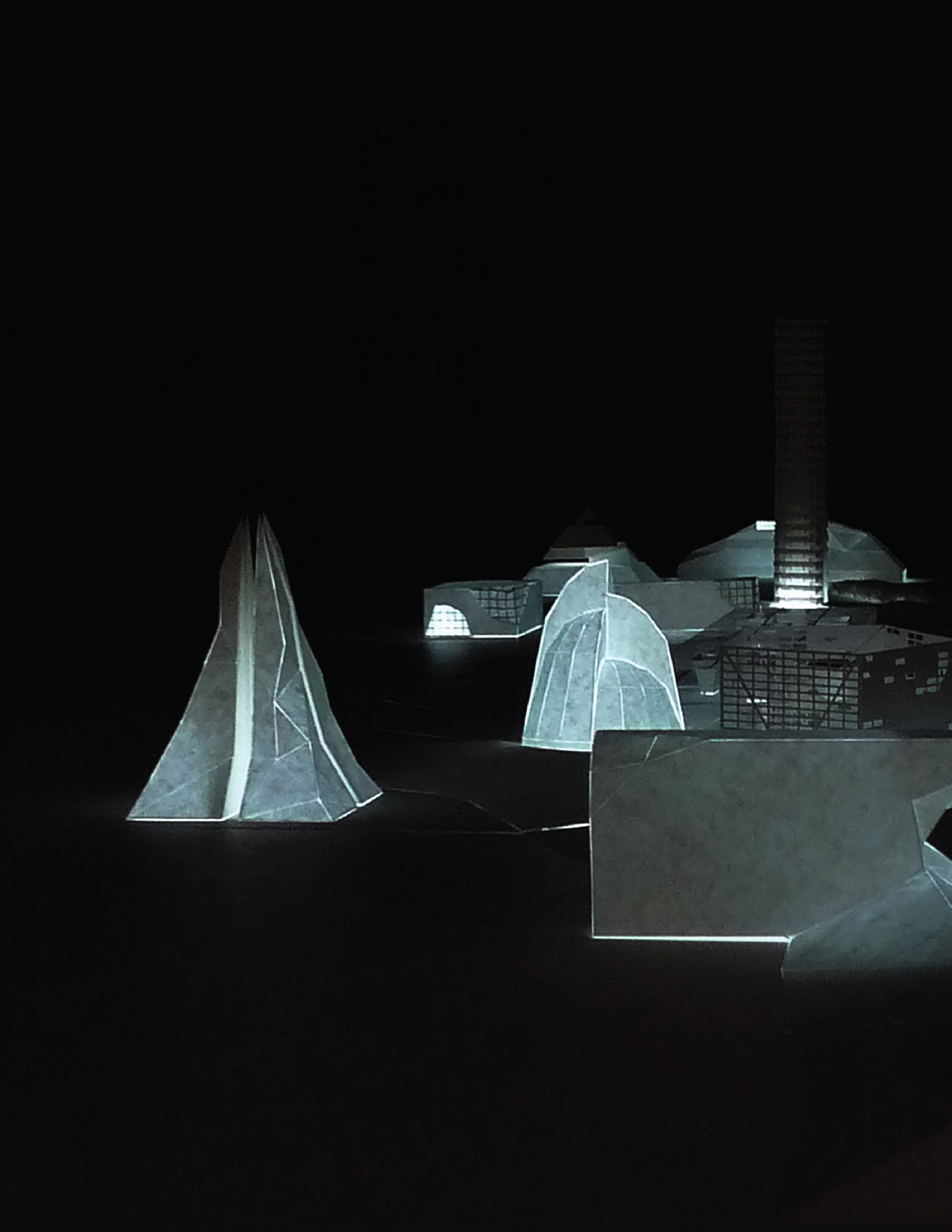
Thick white paper — specifically 140-pound watercolor paper — provides a clean, sterile, and distillative material that still maintains a worldly and slightly coarse texture, keeping its appearance grounded firmly in material reality. The white paper, like a blank canvas enables for the conception of pure form and architectonics; the spatio-formal configuration of the model gains elevated primacy over its material, in a manner similar to the spackled plaster volumes of the master Le Corbusier's work of the 1930s. The specific brand of paper is restricted by its maximum available dimensions of 18 by 24 inches and has an approximate thickness of 1/32 of an inch. Working within these restrictions, the project is established on a workflow of conception, translation, concretization, and transmission.

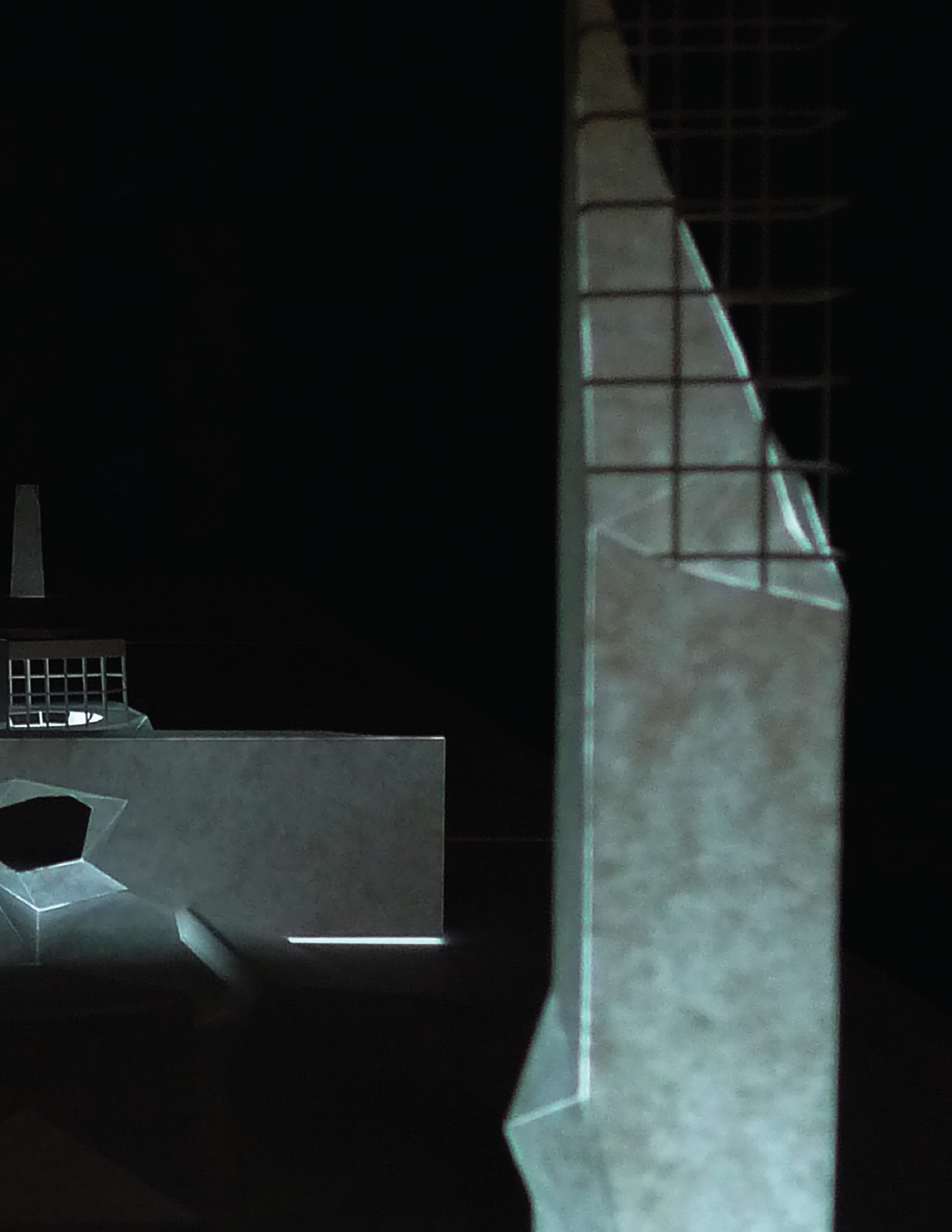
The three-dimensional artifacts serve as corporeal surrogates for the mind's conceptions and stand as physical subjects that can be understood with the additional aid of the models' experiential qualities and effects: textural, tonal; fragile, ephemeral; translucent, illuminative, etc. Additionally, they do a comparable service to the project when the artifacts are represented two-dimensionally, via photograph. The infrequent use of a select few other materials calls attention to their use and through juxtaposition heightens the uniformity of the singular source material of the white paper. This takes into account the necessity for the alternative material to integrate into the larger ideas and consequent aesthetics.

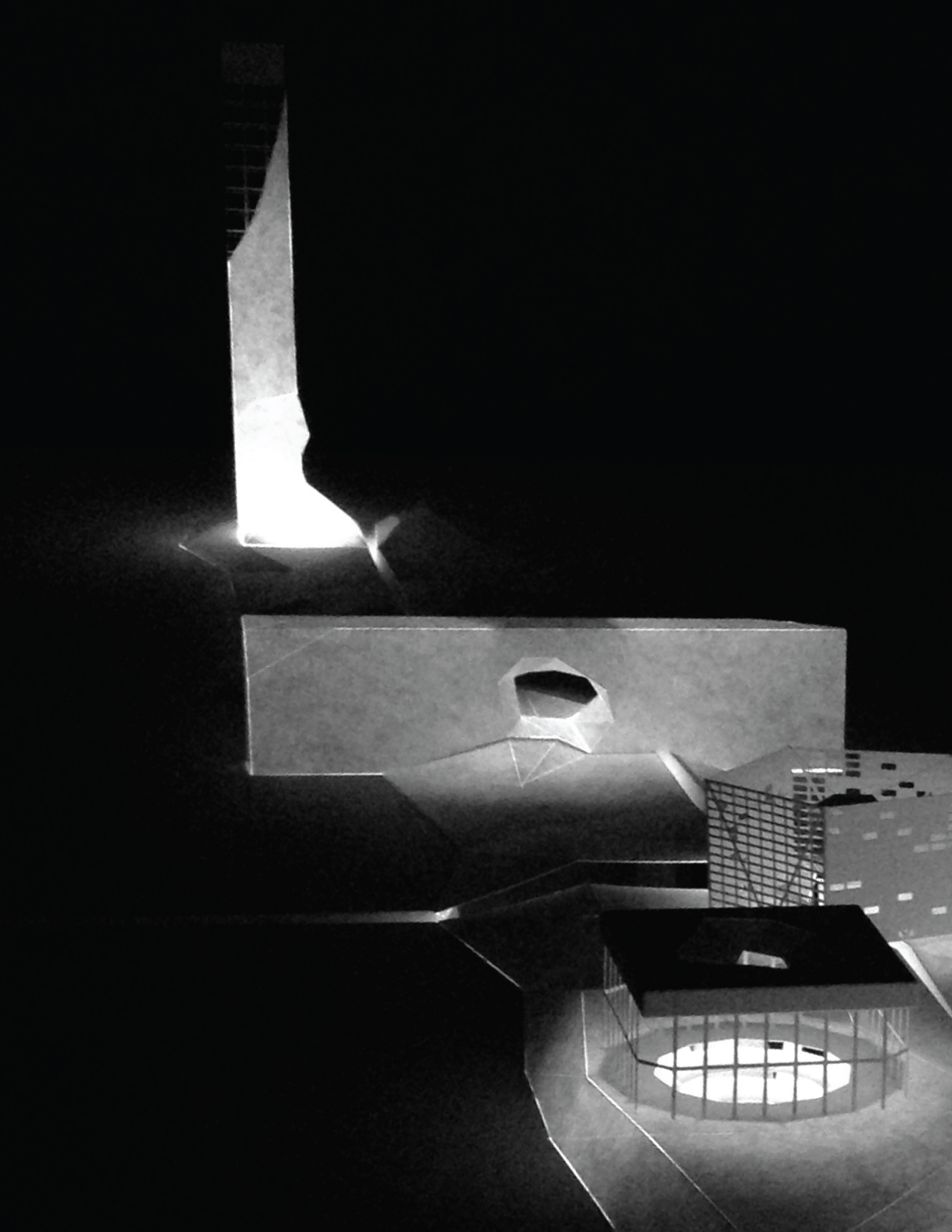
Images opposite: Diagrammatic matrix of process steps, by the author.
Images below: Photographs by the author, workplace and model-making instruments.
Following three spreads: Photographs by the author, artifact production process.

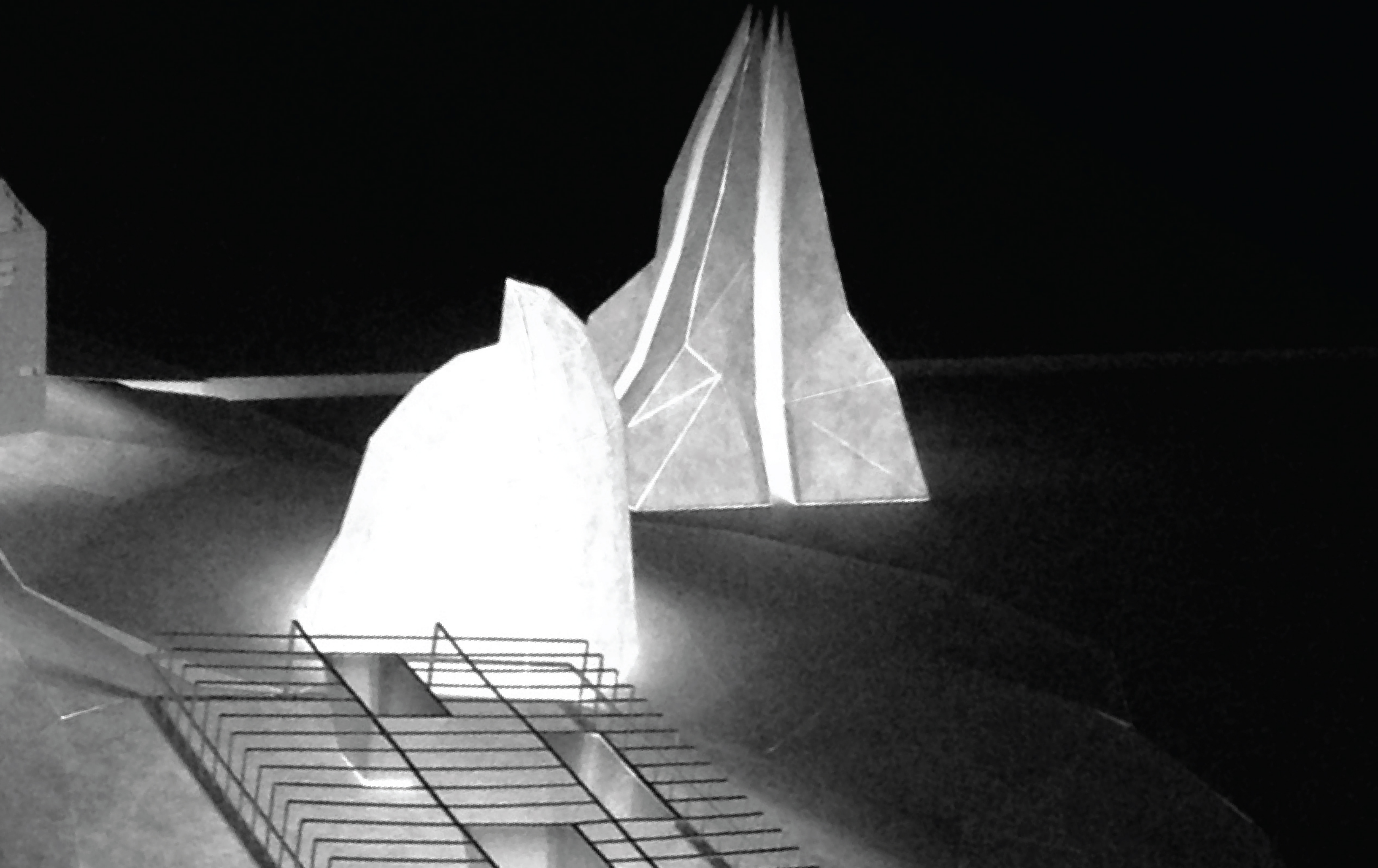


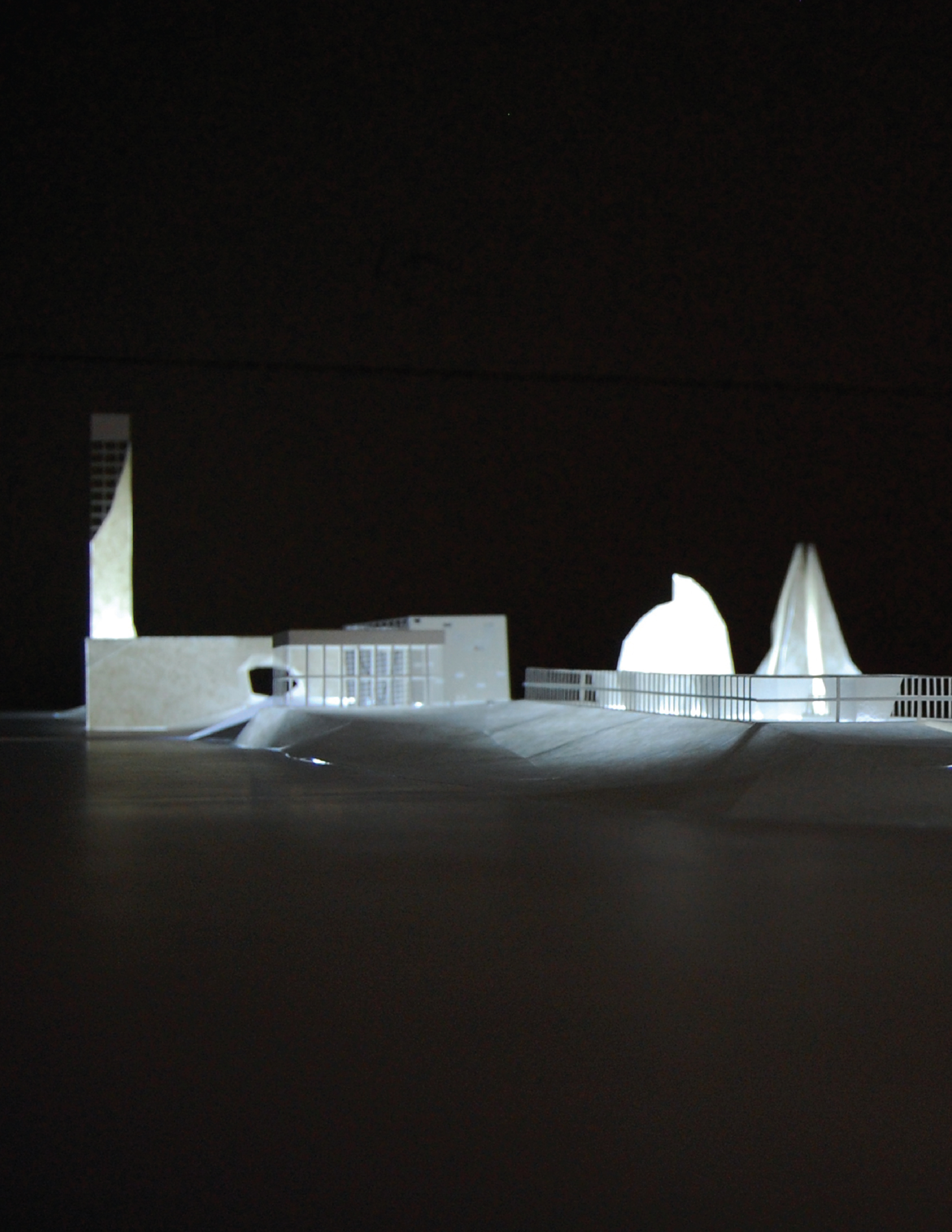


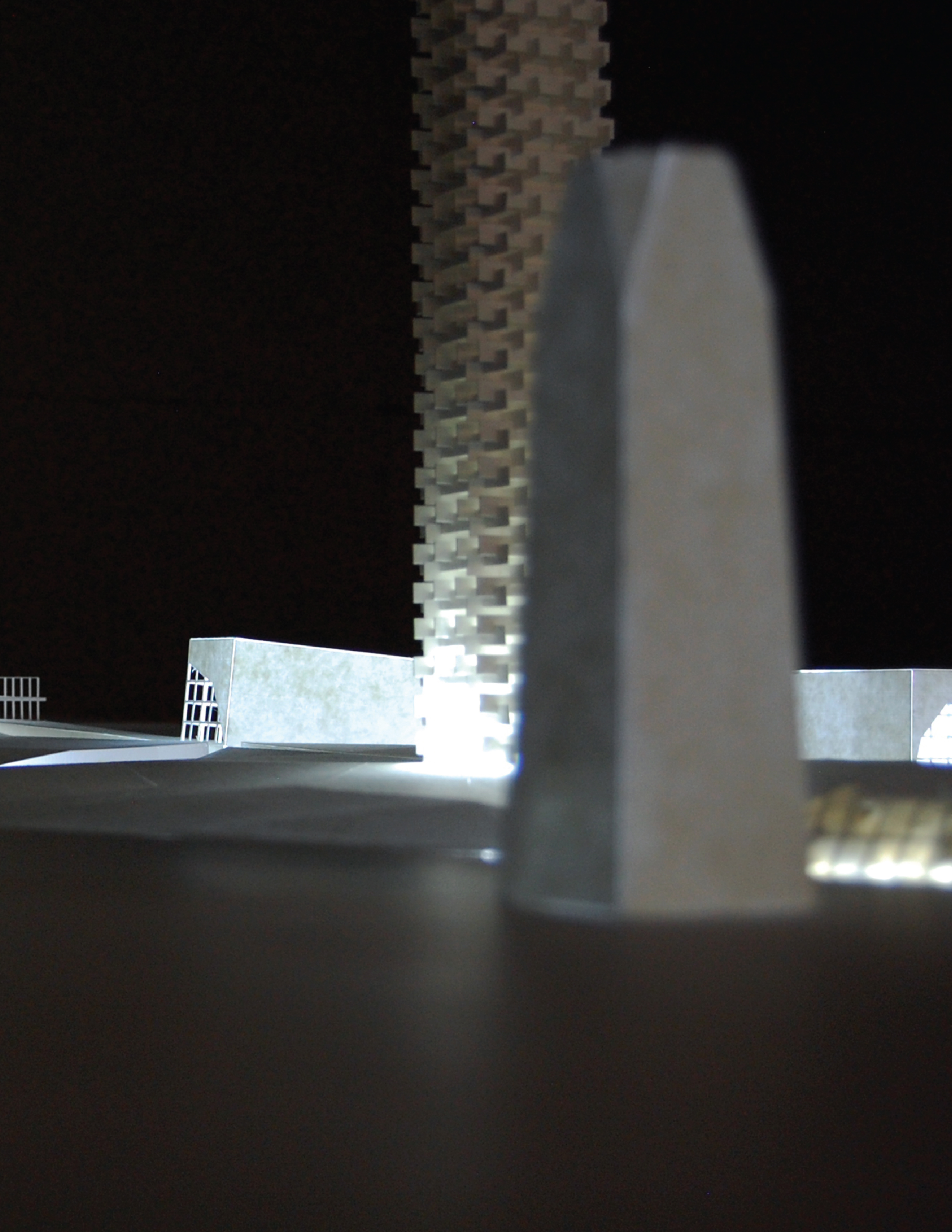


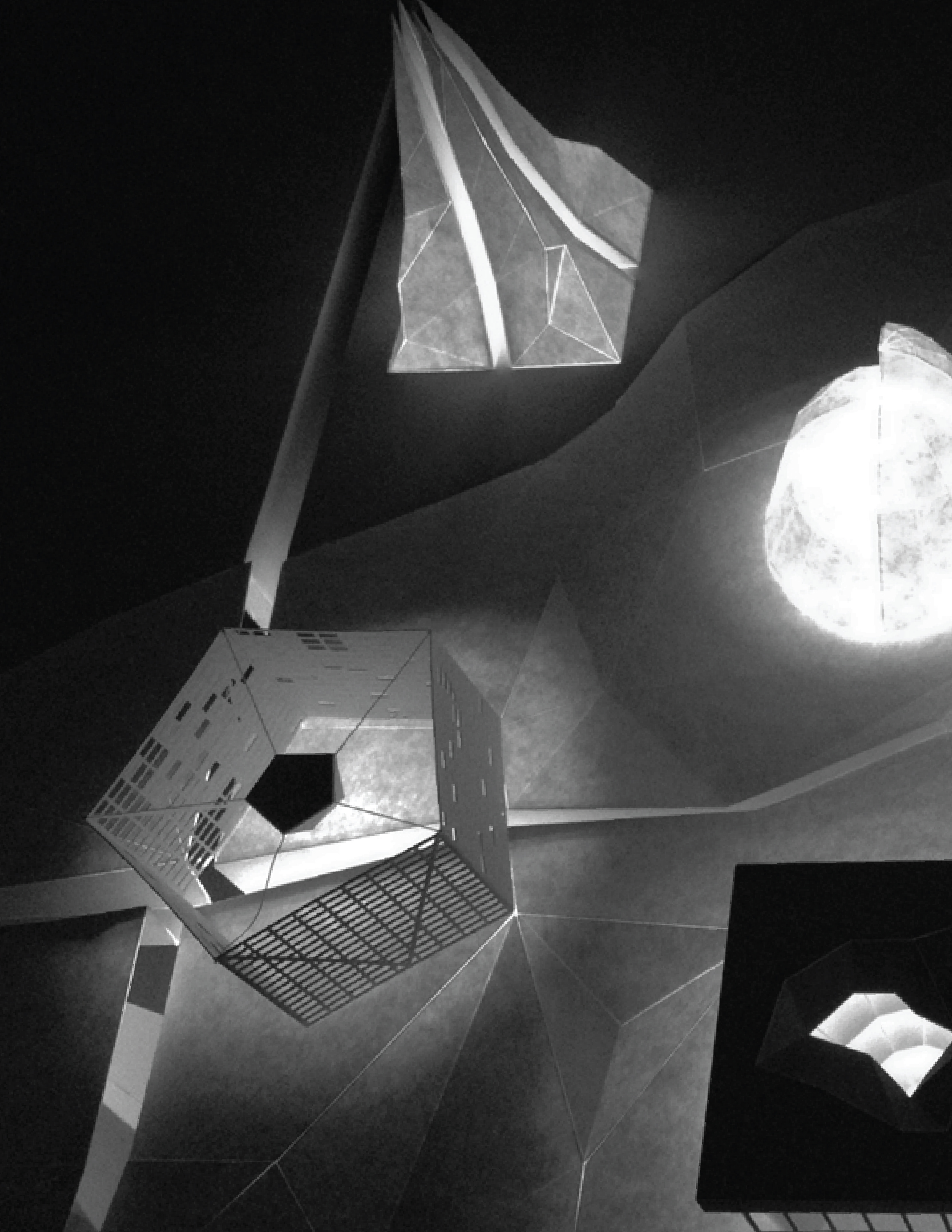


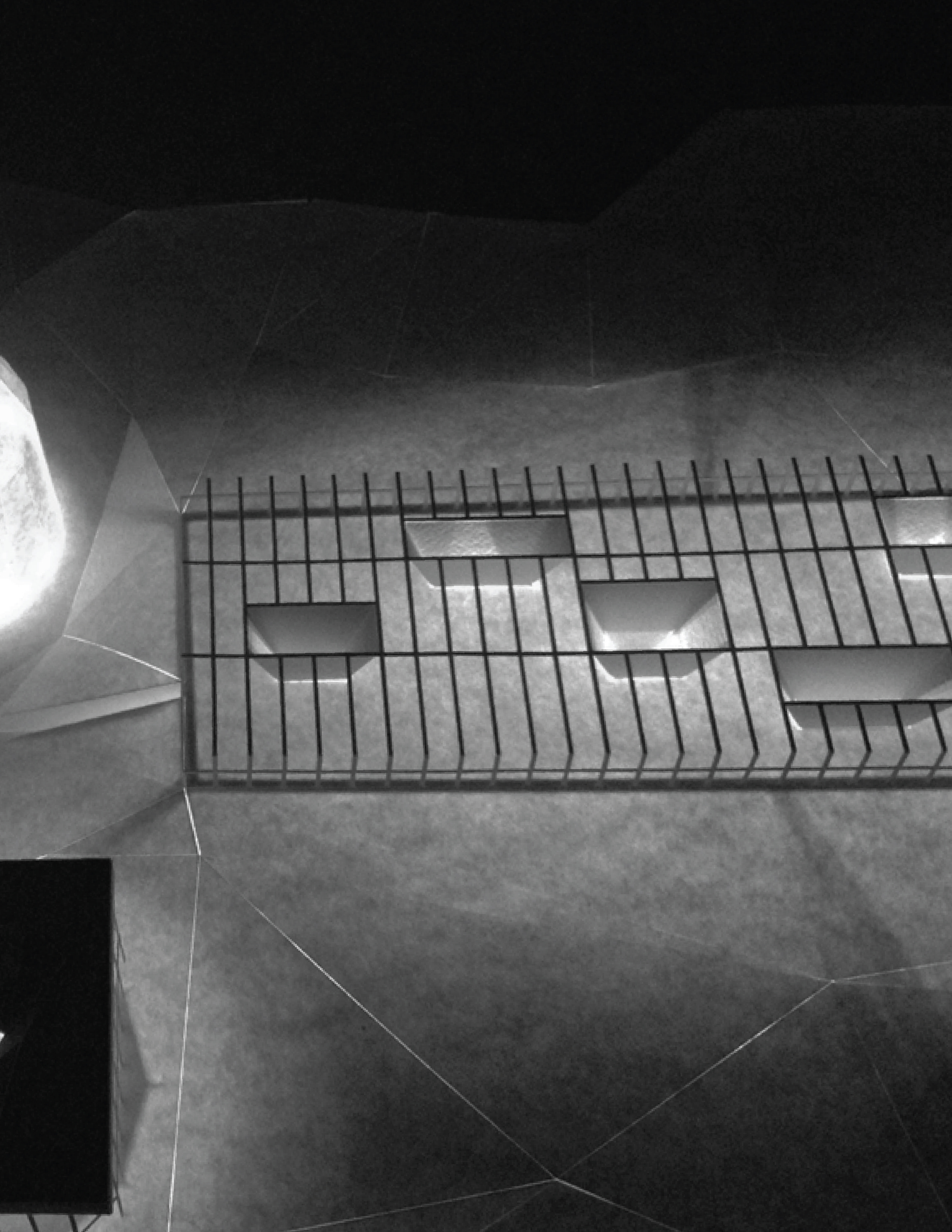


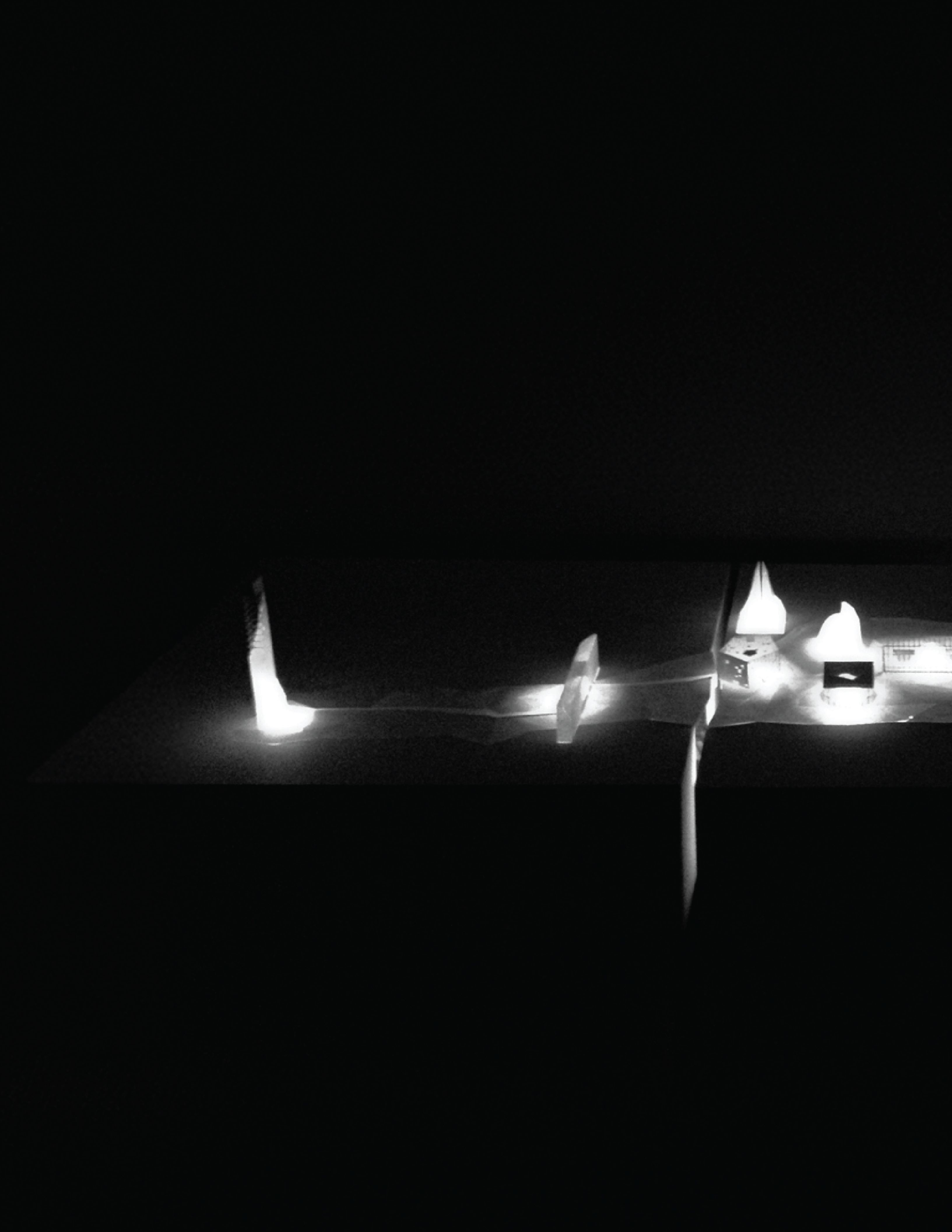


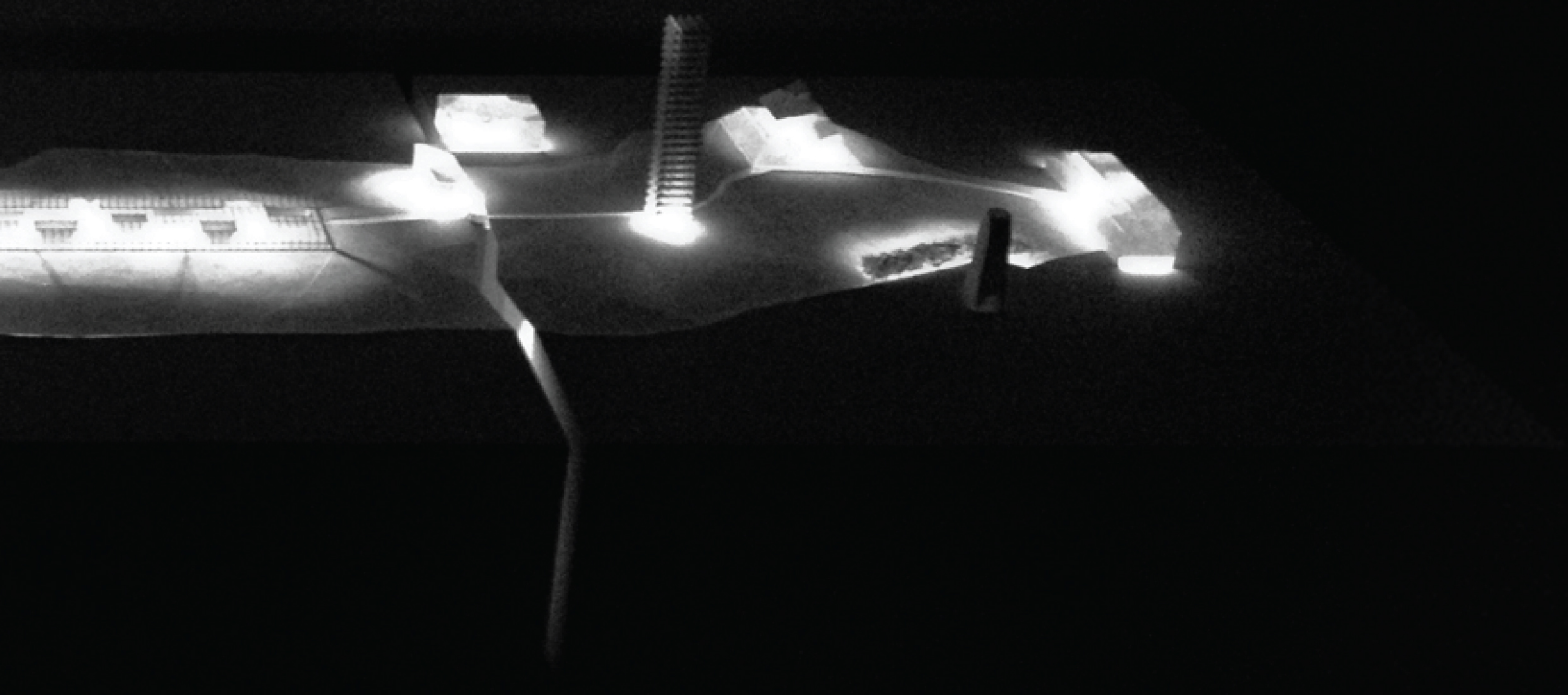












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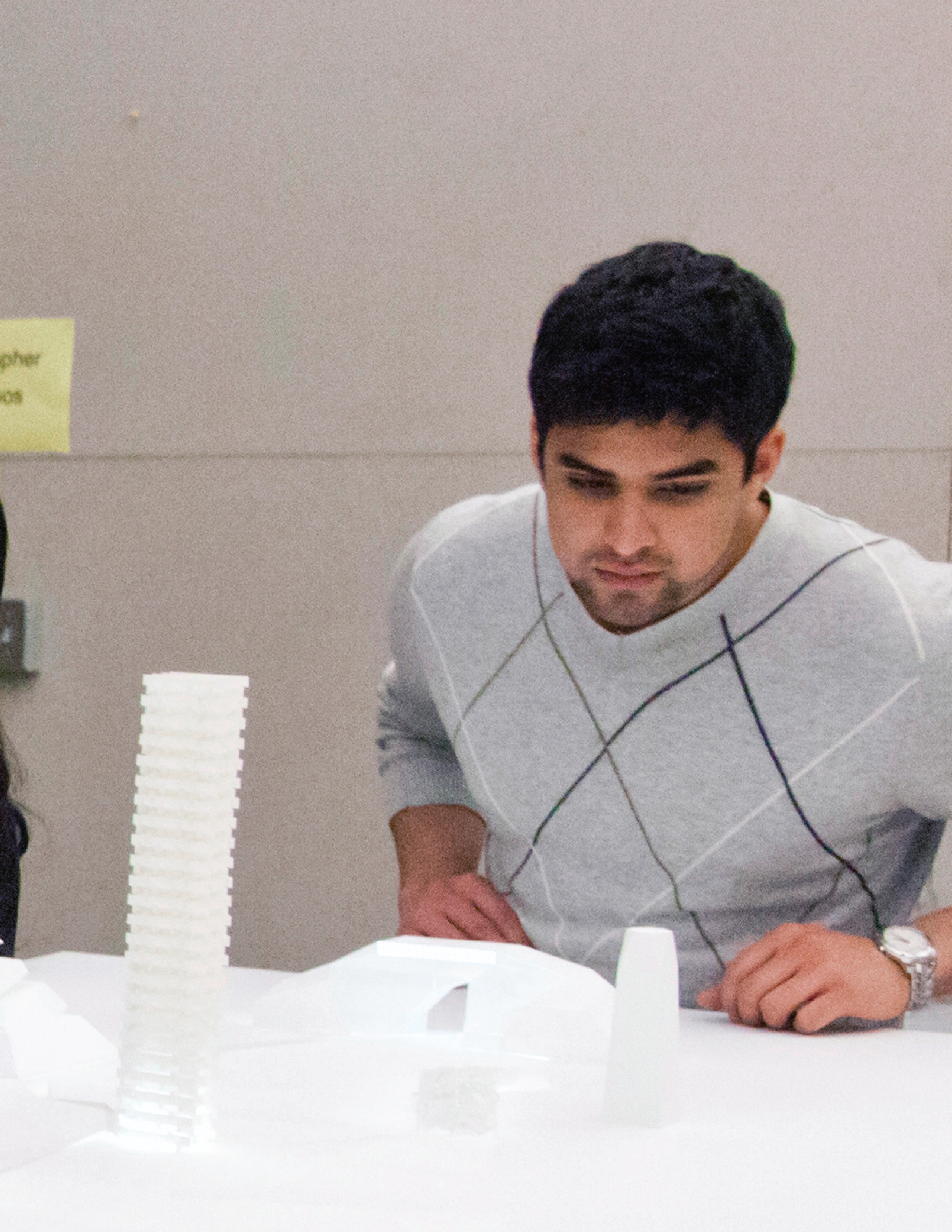
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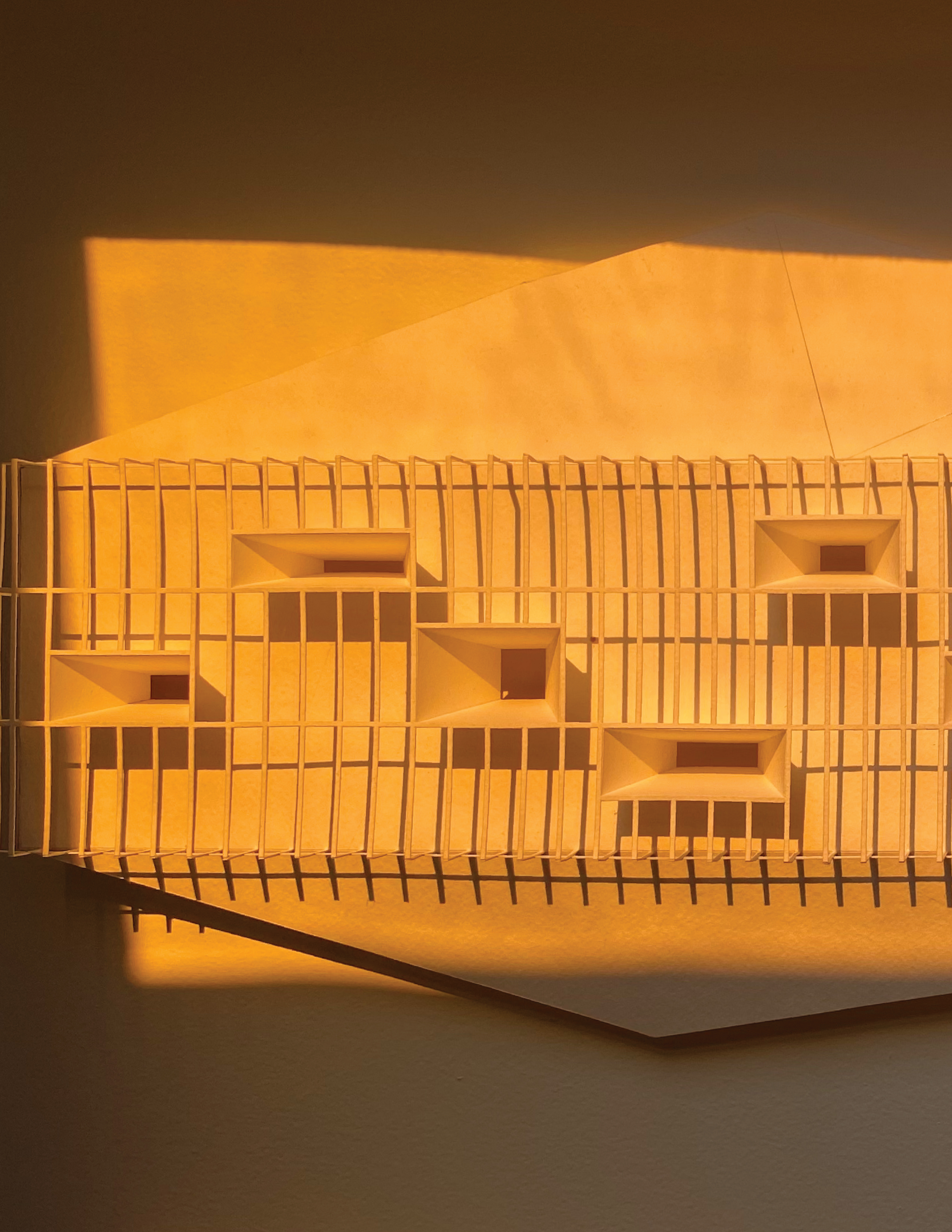

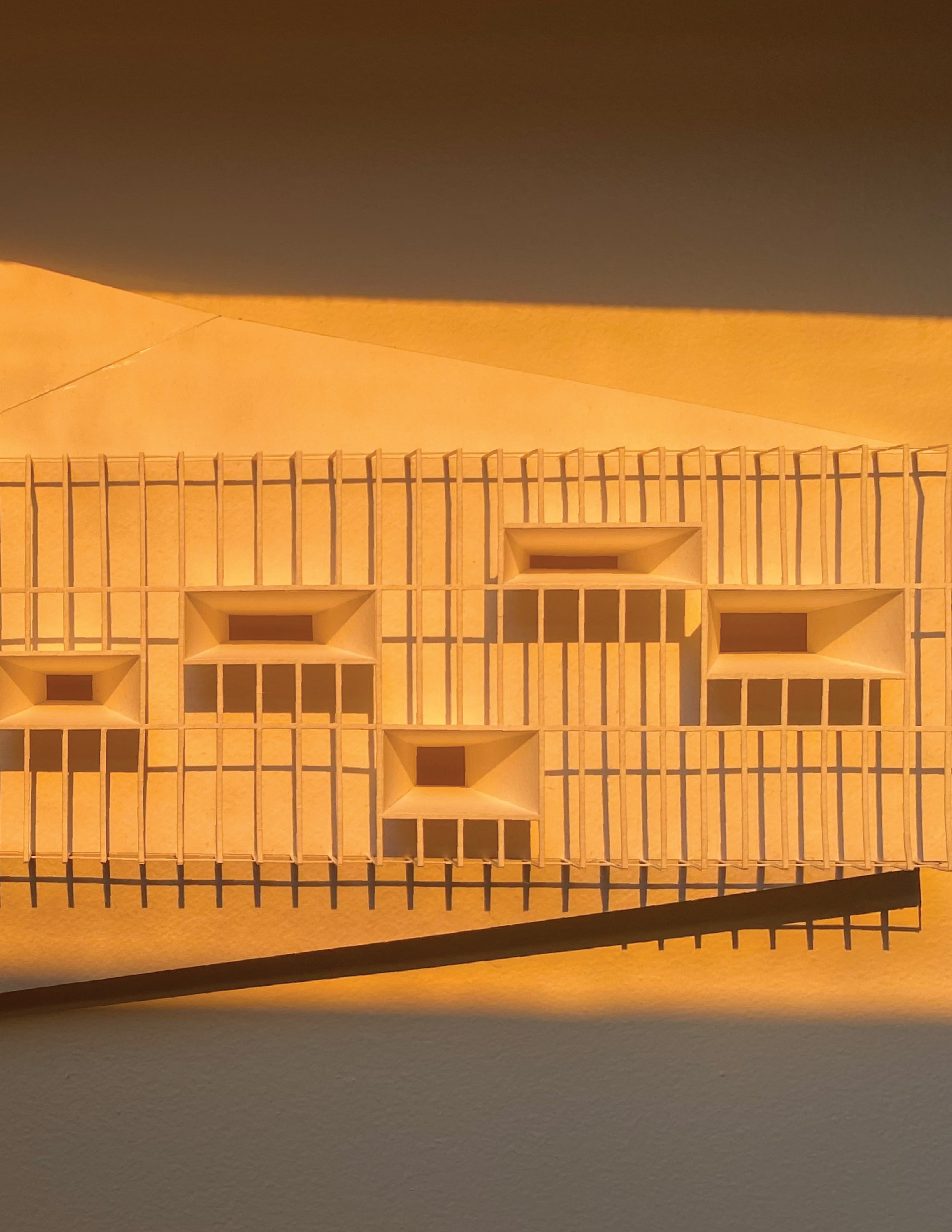

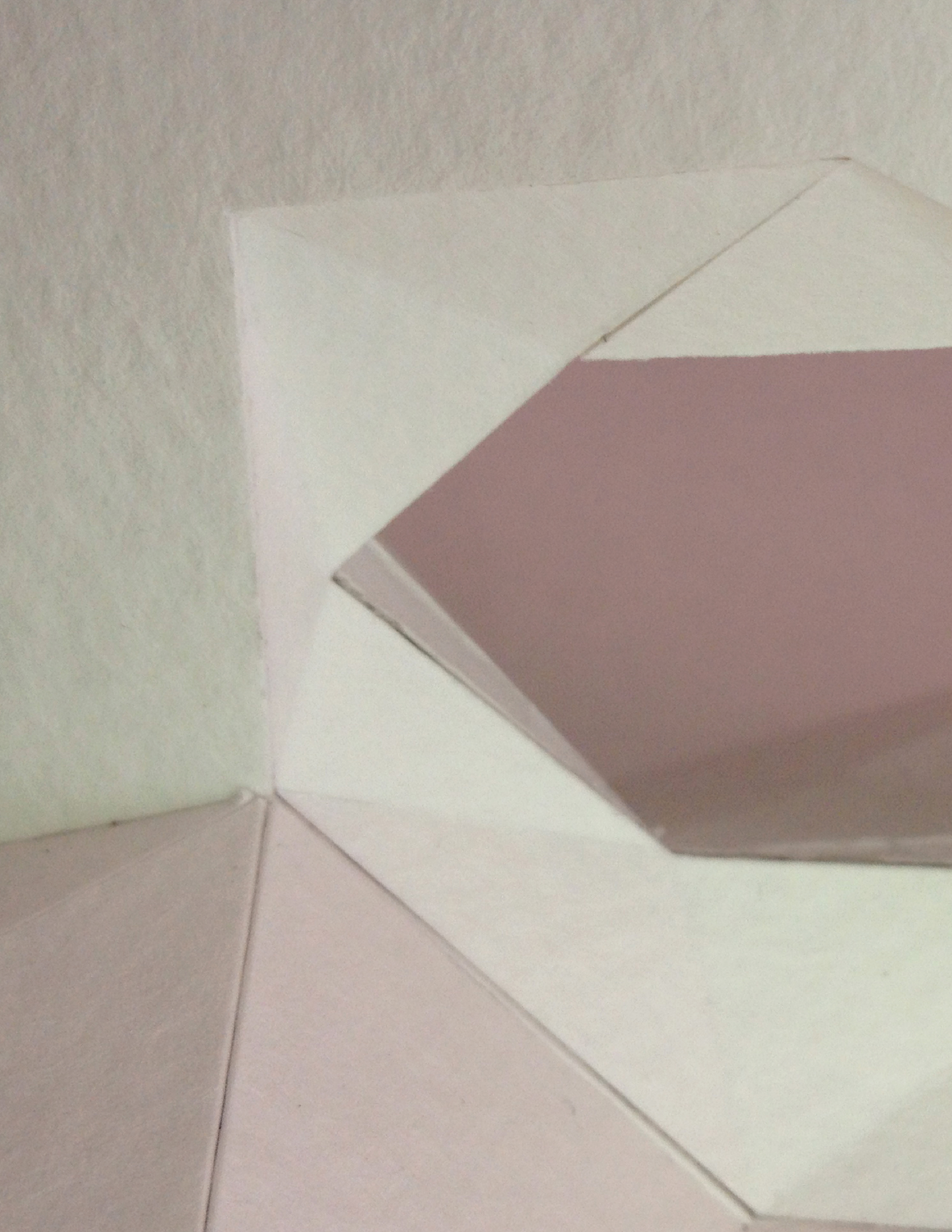

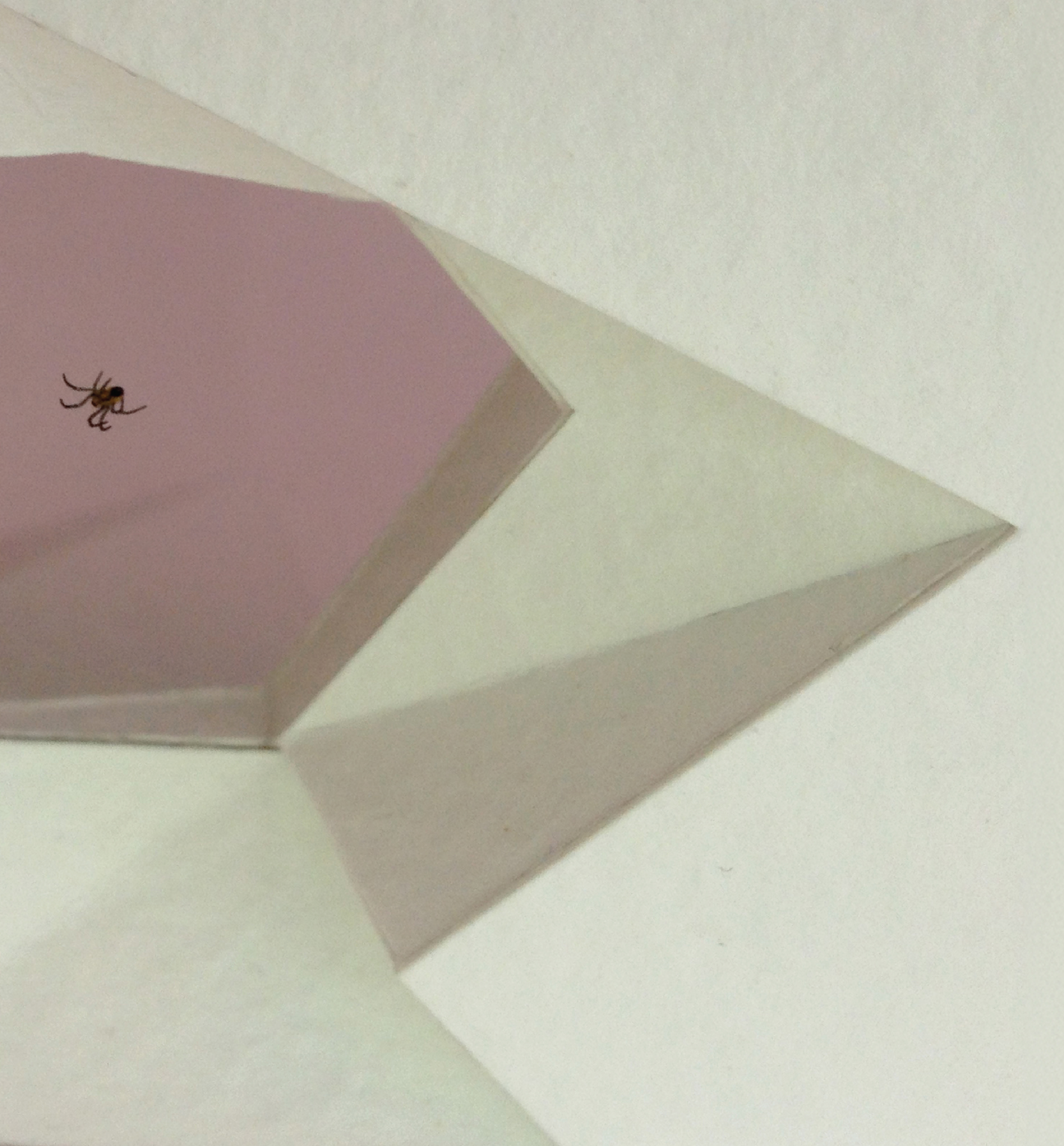

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Additionally, some of the views and ideas contained within this thesis should be considered through the lens of fictional provocation, and do not necessarily represent the beliefs held by the author personally.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks go to:

My parents, grandparents, and ancestors, for my existence;

My father, for his editing, rhetorical expertise, and unwavering support;

Tom Day, Branson Wright, David Hidalgo, David Huber, and Jody Chan,
my inspirational friends, fellow colleagues, and helping hands;

Anda French and Jon Yoder, my wise and understanding advisors;

The caring faculty and administration of the Syracuse University *School of Architecture*,
including Jonathan Massey, Jon Lott, Brendan Moran, Mark Linder, Richard Rosa,
Brian Lonsway, Jean-Francois Bédard, and Randall Korman;

The innumerable eminent figures of Architectural Discourse cited within this work,
for their profound and inspirational contributions to our Discipline and the world;

And Ross Woolley, an invaluable mentor.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

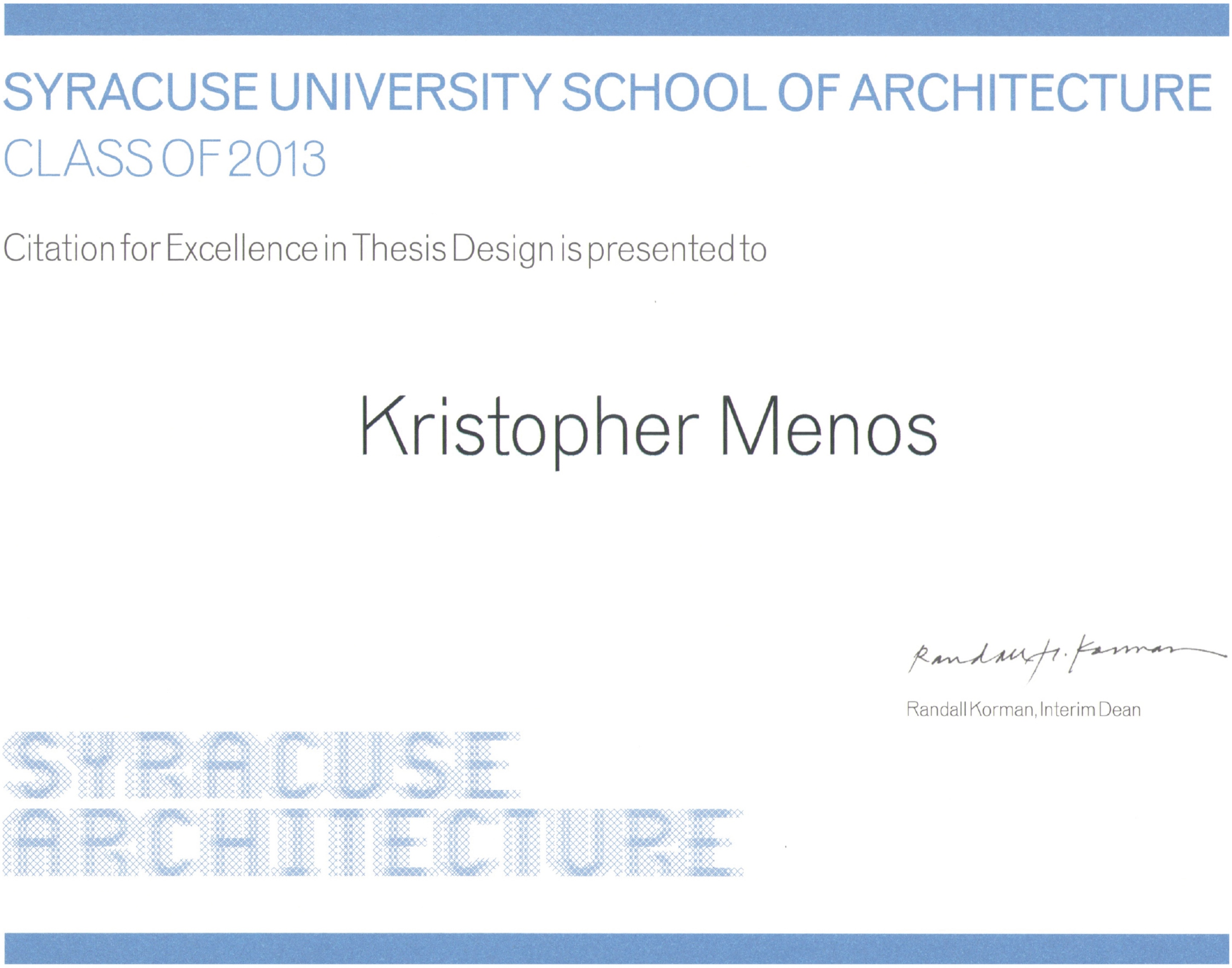
Kris G. Menos is a human being, a designer, and a lifelong student of architecture.

Kris studied at Syracuse University under the *School of Architecture* Scholarship, and attained a professional *Bachelor of Architecture* (*BArch*) degree with dual majors in *Architecture* and the *History of Architecture*, and a focus on mid-century visionary, utopian, and paper architecture. Additional areas of focus include: universalist transhumanism and posthumanism, exhibition and installation design, parametric design, digital fabrication, and handcraft.

Kris has experience on a diverse range of projects, across a wide range of scales and disciplines, including in the fields of urbanism, design, architecture, and construction.

Kris' design research is focused on novel means of anthropomorphic form-making, fabrication, and materiality, using fundamentally human tools, methods, and sources to explore, subvert, or dissolve the Enlightenment-era bifurcation between human and environment.

AWARDS



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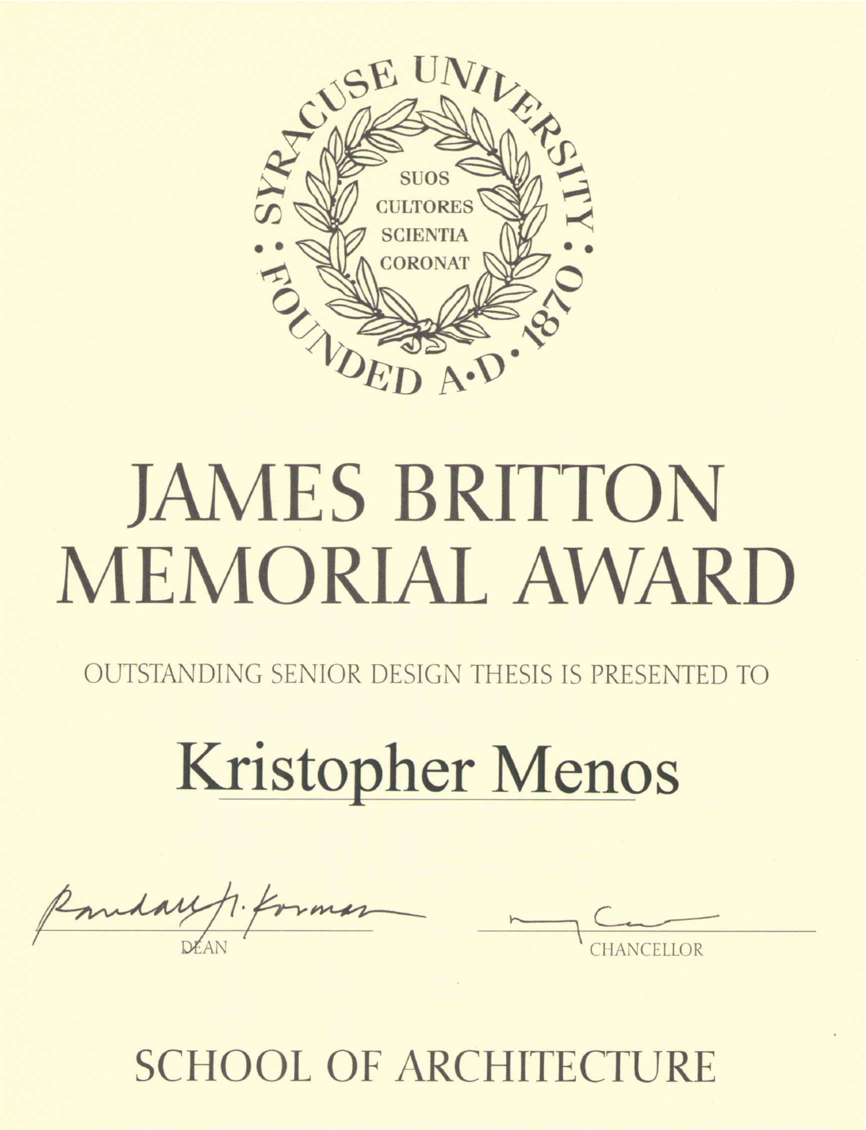

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ISOTOPIA ORATION *ISOTOPIA*
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PETITION *ISOTOPIA* PLAY
ISOTOPIA POEM *ISOTOPIA*
PREMONITION *ISOTOPIA* PROJECT
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SCRIPT *ISOTOPIA* SCRIPTURE
ISOTOPIA SKETCH *ISOTOPIA*
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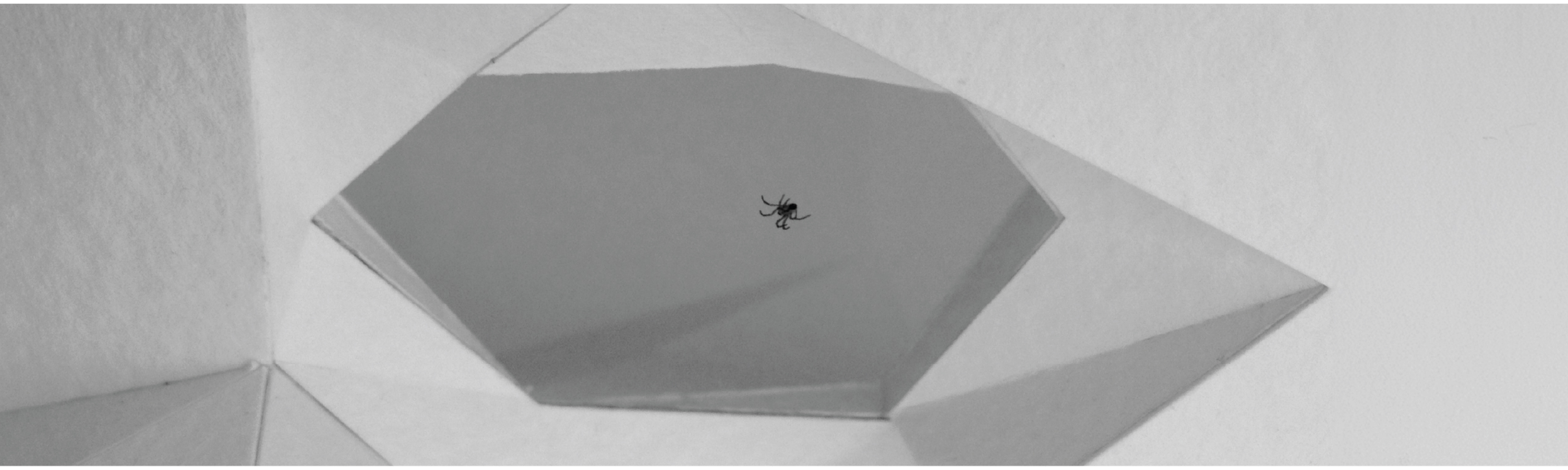
ISOTOPIA

An undergraduate thesis by Kris G. Menos



This project understands architecture as the concretization of culture and Humanity.
As such, this project explores the notion that architecture will participate in future steps of Human evolution.

The project speculates that we, as Human Beings, will evolve, using architecture, perhaps into architecture.